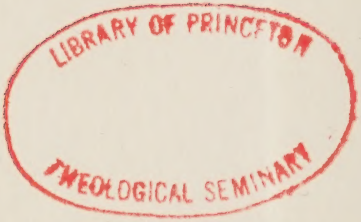

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to a friend on some of the

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TRUTH AND ERROR;

OR,

LETTERS TO A FRIEND,

ON

Some of the Controversies of the Day.

"There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."—1 Cor. xi. 19.

BY THE

REV. HORATIUS BONAR,

AUTHOR OF "NIGHT OF WEEPING," "MORNING OF JOY," "STORY OF GRACE," ETC.

NEW YORK:

ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

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"What is it all? Nothing but a self-achieved and self-wr ought acquisition, earned wages, human handywork. He has read hi mself into it, or it has been talked, preached, persuaded, or practised l into him by others; but the Holy Ghost has no share in his illu mina- tion; he has not been taught of the Lord; and therefore, als o, all that he has thus swallowed down, lies like a dead capital, bri nging in no interest; the food has not been digested, and therefor e not converted into juice, blood, and life, and his spikenard give s no scent."—*Krummacher.*

"Let us be prepared for such a spirit (of error;) let us n ot be stumbled if it come glowing with the message of God's love; r ebuk- ing, exhorting, encouraging; weeping over the recital of Cl rist's sorrows. All this will Satan be likely now to do; for nothing short of this will be likely to deceive the elect."—*Letter to a Friend on the Religious State of the Country.* 1837. P. 10.

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PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

I FEEL thankful that God has so prospered and blessed this little work, that now, two large editions having been exhausted, a third is called for.

In revising it for the press, while I have felt the many defects which exist in it, I have been led to rejoice more and more in the truth for which it is designed to be a testimony. The errors against which it is pointed are, I believe, in some measure subsiding; but still it is most needful that the warning should be kept up. The doctrines at stake are not subordinate and unessential. They are momentous and vital,—both in themselves and in their consequences. They lie at the very foundation of true theology, and are imbedded in the very heart of the Word of God. The denial of them involves not only a misinterpretation of Scripture, but a misrepresentation of Jehovah's character. In such a case there can be no compromise. The man who denies the sovereignty of the Father, the *substitu-*

tionary work of the Son, the *direct* operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, and who expunges the doctrine of absolute election from the ninth of the Romans, may not be a Socinian himself, but he holds radically Socinian principles, and his followers will assuredly carry out these into open and broad Socinianism.

KELSO, April, 1850.

NOTE.

I HAVE carefully revised these Letters, correcting and supplementing very considerably, so as to render them more complete and more useful. In the first edition I referred but sparingly to writers upon the different points in question. In this edition I have thought it best to give what references I had collected, both in order to render the book more complete, and also for the sake of those who desire to study the various subjects. Still, I build nothing upon these in the way of *authority*. It is to the law and to the testimony that the appeal is taken. Let God be true, and every man a liar.

"Buy the truth, and sell it not:" that is, get truth at whatever price or cost; but part with it on no consideration, and for no price whatsoever.

INTRODUCTION.

These Letters are little more than fragments. They do not aim at a complete statement of the truth, or a systematic arrangement of it. It is only a few important points that they touch.

To have extended them and embraced a wider range of doctrine would not have suited my design. I wished to warn you against some of the prevailing errors of the time, lest ye, being "led away from your steadfastness," should follow after the "diverse and strange doctrines" of these last days. Hence it was necessary to dwell upon those errors which have been most prominently advanced, and to open up those truths which have been most perverted and denied.

There may be found here and there a few repetitions. These I tried to avoid as much as possible, but could not altogether succeed. I found that so close is the connection between

the different truths as well as the different errors, that after I had discussed them in one place, they would rise up in a second, or even a third, springing now out of one doctrine, and again out of another. I do not regret this. It may tend to show more fully the harmony of all the different parts of the truth, and their connection with each other, so that it will be seen that as all truth is linked together in its different parts, so is all error. How great, then, the danger of slighting any truth or giving way to any error!

My appeal is to the Word of God. What are the reasonings, or opinions, or inferences of men? What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Let the Bible decide each question. It is for this end that I have appended to each letter a selection of passages at length.

The real question of the present day is just this,—*Is man a totally and thoroughly depraved being by nature?*—Is he ruined, helpless, and blind, dead in trespasses and sins? Many other questions have arisen, but this is the centre one. According to the views we entertain regarding this, will be our views on other points. It is upon the truth of this doctrine that the whole Bible proceeds. And

hence I would at the outset warn you strongly against any attempt to modify, or abate, or dilute the statements of Scripture on this point.

Man being thoroughly depraved in nature, is it possible, I ask, to save him without a special and direct intervention of Father, Son, and Spirit, in his behalf? In other words, can he be saved in any way which does not involve personal election by the Father, particular redemption by the Son, and direct, immediate, overcoming operation of the Holy Spirit? Or, putting the question in another form, and using the language of science—given a totally depraved being, is it possible to save that being by any plan which makes the *previous* concurrence of his own will an indispensable preliminary, or which makes it necessary that he should take the first step in the matter of return to God?

If you place the different errors of the day before you in this light, you will find that they all more or less directly deny or encroach upon the doctrine of man's original and actual depravity.

You will find, also, that the objections urged against God's sovereignty and man's helplessness, are just different manifestations of hu-

man pride,—the pride into which Satan tempted Adam, "Ye shall be as gods," and into which all his offspring have fallen along with him. Man will not consent to be nothing, that God alone may be ALL. And it is curious to observe that the objections urged against these truths are not passages of Scripture, but human reasonings—man's inferences and opinions. Take, as a specimen, the doctrine of God's sovereignty. We have many passages broadly declaring this, but not one setting forth the opposite. How, then, do men contrive to deny this truth? They begin to reason and speculate upon it; and by means of certain *inferences* of their own, try to make it appear inconsistent with other doctrines to which *they* attach great importance. They say, "Does not God invite the sinner to come to Christ, does he not tell us that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn and live: now, how can this be true, if He be absolutely sovereign in his proceedings? We cannot reconcile these things together, therefore we must *explain away* the passages which assert God's sovereignty and electing will. They cannot be understood in their *plain* and *literal* sense: we must devise some other meaning for them

which will accord with our ideas of God's love." Thus, pride of intellect, confidence in human reason, eagerness to establish one favorite doctrine and to make everything bend to it, supersede and overturn the Word of God. Scripture is not implicitly relied upon, unless borne out by the systems or the syllogisms of reason and the conclusions of man's poor fallen intellect.

Cleave, then, to the Word of God. Distrust your own hearts, lean not to your own understandings,—but receive with meekness the ingrafted word. "The world through wisdom knew not God:" and we must stoop to "become fools, that we may be wise." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."*

It is a singular fact, that the tendencies of the present day are to substitute the operation of general laws for the direct interposition of God. This is Satan's present device; and it is a device which he is carrying out into all departments of knowledge,—philosophy, science, literature, and theology. Some ten or

* See first and second chapters of First Corinthians.

twelve years ago, for instance, we had a specimen of this in a work called "My Old House, or the doctrine of changes," by an individual taking to himself the name of a minister of Christ. He had conjured up a magnificent system of laws, a self-moving universe; and though he frequently spoke of Divine Providence, it was evident that the idea of Providence was a disturbance of the harmony, a disfigurement of the graceful beauty of his system. Just so is it with the theology of some in our day. They would carry on everything by *means* alone, by intermediate agencies; and though they often speak of the Holy Spirit, yet it is very manifest that the doctrine of the Spirit's work sets their system out of joint, and is quite an incumbrance to it. *Their system is quite complete without any such agency.** This is already felt, and hence His direct personal operation is set aside. What may be the issue of this in a few years,

* If this seems a strong statement, I just ask what is meant by a sort of proverbial expression of theirs, in common use, "that man needs no more help to believe God's truth, than to believe the devil's lie." A more complete denial of the Spirit's entire work there could not be. For as man does not need the Spirit at all to enable him to believe the lie, so according to them he does not need in any sense the Spirit to enable him to believe the truth. See this adverted to in Letter Ninth.

we shall not venture to predict. Whether such a theory can long subsist with the belief of the Divine personality of the Spirit, or which of the two is likelier to give way, we shall leave to others to determine.

Of late, the well-known work, "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," is another specimen of what we mean. In that work the author tells us that he has suggested "a physiological explanation of the development of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, leading to the conclusion that the designs of Creative wisdom *were entirely effected by the intervention of natural laws.*" His object is to prove that God works only mediately and indirectly, through his law, but not by the forth-putting of his power in any more direct manner. Now it is this very principle that pervades the new theology. Like the above writer, the new divines frequently speak of the Spirit, so as to lead many to suppose that they do not at all question his work; but they never fail to add, that He only works "in the use of means," not by "an inward direct energy."* Now, in re-

* See the Correspondence of the Congregational Churches, p. 26, and other places. The Churches who held fast the truth, and remonstrated with their brethren, thus express

gard to the statements of the man of science, we are quite willing to admit that God does work "by the intervention of natural laws;" but the question is, does He work in that way *alone?* He affirms; we deny it, and maintain that such doctrine is philosophic scepticism. So in regard to the statements of the divines alluded to, we are equally willing to grant that the Holy Spirit does work by the use of means; but the question is, does he work by the use of means *alone?* They affirm; we deny it. We say that he operates *directly* upon the soul, and maintain that the opposite of this is theological scepticism.

Both of these are truly signs of the last days—signs arising in different quarters of the heavens, yet obviously the same in kind. They manifest singular *unity* of design on the part of Satan. In both, we see his repugnance to the direct *will* of Jehovah. In both,

their judgment as to their opinions: "Honesty requires us to say that you seem to us to admit *in words* what you deny *in fact*," p. 10. Again they remark on the ambiguous and equivocal language used by their correspondents—"It is the hackneyed subterfuge employed in all ages by those who have held the errors that we are opposing, to say that the influence of mere means is the influence of the Spirit, since the means have proceeded from and express the mind of the Spirit, and thus they have sought to *cheat the unwary with words, spreading the belief that they have admitted the Spirit's influence, when in fact they have denied it.*"

his object is to separate men from Him in whom they live, and move, and have their being. In both, he is seeking to make the creature's communication with the Creator less personal and direct; to set aside the necessity of His ever-interposing agency; to impugn the equity of making the creature thoroughly dependent upon the all-regulating will and pleasure of the Creator; to deny the great Bible truth which is the very basis of redemption, that separate from God, there can be no stability for the creature, and that it is only by the grace of His own continually-imparted power that the creature can be holy, or even *be* at all.

Were these new theories correct, most melancholy were our case! For where would be the blessedness that flows from our direct dealings with God in prayer and praise? Are prayer and praise to be mere messages, sent by us to a far-distant Being, whose feelings and ours can never intermingle? Or are they to be the close, real, personal converse of one friend with another, face to face? Admit the modern theory, and direct communion with God must be a thing unknown. For, if God only communicates with us through means, then we only communicate with him through

the same. The far-off influence of the moon upon the tides of ocean is, in such a case, the true emblem of God's operations upon us; and the responsive but cold heaving of the billows upward would be the only figure of our intercourse with Him. The living God and the living soul could never meet and embrace each other in love. They could only carry on their intercourse by signs, and means, and influences.*

But let these remarks suffice as an Introduction. I put these Letters into the hands

* "The distinction which is sometimes made, that in a *miracle* God is immediately working, and, in other events, is leaving it to the laws which he has established to work, cannot at all be admitted, for it has its root in a dead mechanical view of the universe, which lies altogether remote from the truth. The clock-maker makes his clock, and leaves it; the ship-builder builds and launches his ship, and others navigate it; but the world is no curious piece of mechanism which its Master makes and then dismisses from his hands, only from time to time reviewing and repairing it; but, as our Lord says, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' 'he upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' And to speak of 'laws of God,' 'laws of nature,' may become to us a language altogether deceptive, and hiding the deeper reality from our eyes. *Laws* of God exist only for us. It is a *will* of God for himself. That will indeed, being the will of highest wisdom and love, excludes all wilfulness, is a will upon which we can securely count; from the past expressions of it, we can presume its future, and so we rightfully call it a law. But still from moment to moment it is a *will;* each law, as we term it, of nature, is only that which we have learned of nature concerning this will in that particular region of its activity."—*Trench on the Miracles*, pp. 9, 10.

of you, my dear people, that you may be helped to understand the truth of God, and may be kept steadfast therein. You know that these are the very truths which, during these eight years of my ministry among you, I have ever sought to teach you. My desire is to lay before you, in a more abiding form, the substance of my teaching from the pulpit. In the freeness of the glorious gospel, I have endeavored to instruct you in many ways; and I would not that you should be left unwarned against the errors which some are introducing amongst us, under pretext of preaching that gospel more freely; "lest Satan should get an advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices."

"Little children, it is the last time; and, as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time."

"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

LETTER I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace."—Heb. xiii. 9.

My dear Friend,

You seem bewildered amid the opinions of the day, almost as much as you would be in the midst of a company where each spoke in a different tongue. The difficulty of judging what is truth seems increasing, instead of disappearing. You know not what to think, nor which way to turn, in order to discover who is right, or where certainty is to be found; so many novelties stagger and amaze you. There seem to be good men on both sides, and that perplexes you still more.

You long for peace amid the jar of these unruly elements, and for stability amid these shifting sands. Yet rest comes not. There is no end of change. One novelty begets another, and that, in its turn, becomes equally productive. One error requires another to

maintain it, this second must have a third or fourth to lean upon. One false step leads to twenty, or perhaps a hundred more. Who knows where all this is to end?*

The changes are numerous. Every month produces some new doctrine, or at least some modification of the old. Fickle minds lie in wait for something new. As the edge of one novelty wears down, another must be provided in its place to keep up the unhealthy excitement. Thus fickleness becomes doubly fickle by being gratified; novelties multiply, and the sore evil spreads. Men do not tremble at the thought of falling into error. To change opinions upon some casual impulse, or some shallow catch of an argument, is thought but a light thing; as if the falling into error were no great matter, instead of being a fearful calamity; or as if the entrance upon truth were an indifferent occurrence, instead of being the occasion of deep and solemn joy. Many who but lately were high Calvinists are now Arminians of the lowest grade, passing through the different levels with the most singular facility and flippancy, as easily and

* "They want something new, something which has a peculiar relish; old things have grown wearisome to them." —*Dr. Merle D'Aubigne on the character of the theologian.*

airily as the musician runs up and down the scale with the finger or the voice.

How is all this? you will ask. It might be enough to answer that it is written, "There shall come in the last days perilous times, when men shall be heady, high-minded, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth;"* "when they shall not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and shall turn away their ears from the truth."† But let us inquire a little farther. There seem to be chiefly three reasons for this; first, the soul is not at rest; secondly, the conscience is not at work; thirdly, there is little "trembling at the word." I might refer to others, but these are the prominent ones.

1. *The soul is not at rest.*—There is a resting-place for the weary,—deep and broad, immovable and sure,—Jesus, the sin-bearing Lamb of God. But these unstable ones have not reached it. They speak much of it, talk as if they alone knew anything about it, as if none could state the gospel so freely as they; yet it is manifest that they have not yet real-

* 2 Tim. iii. 4, 7. † 2 Tim. iv. 3.

ized that stable peace which comes from the knowledge of the living Jesus. They are not at rest; and till the *soul* be at rest, the *mind* cannot. It will always be making vain fetches after new opinions, in the hope that this or that new doctrine may perchance bring to it the peace which it has hitherto sought in vain. Be assured of this, that a *mind* not at rest bespeaks a *soul* not at rest; and whatever men may affirm to you about their assurance or their peace, if you see them ever on the watch, ever on the wing for some new opinion, you may be sure there is little rest within. In many cases it may be vanity, attachment to a sect, desire for proselytizing others, or simply self-will; but in most cases I have no doubt that it is really in quest of peace that these poor souls are stretching out their weary hands, ready to embrace anything that will fill the dreary void, and pour over their souls that settled calm and sunshine, to which, in spite of all their profession, they are really strangers. They are not fastened to the anchor cast within the veil, or else they have let go their hold; and hence they are drifting from place to place in quest of anchorage, but unable to find it. They try, by means of change, to allay the fever and fretfulness of an

unsettled spirit, yet all the while they boast of their assurance, and perhaps censure you sorely if you cannot speak their language and assume their tone.

2. *The conscience is not at work.*—The conscience has far more to do in receiving or rejecting opinions than many suppose. It should stand like a sentinel at the door of the mind, to try all truth before it enter. A tender conscience is cautious, and oftentimes very slow in admitting truth, and, on this very account, most tenacious in holding it fast. Hence, a child of God, with a tender conscience, is often much slower in receiving truth than others. For it has to do with conscience in his case; it has to pass into the mind under a watchful eye, which fears to be rash and hasty, and trembles at the thought of giving entrance to error. A conscience asleep, or seared, or secure, makes quick work. A specious objection is presented to some old truth, or a plausible argument in favor of some new opinion, and, forthwith, the former is thrust out, the latter taken in, without any resistance, or delay, or trembling on the part of conscience, or any light and guidance from God, sought and obtained upon the matter.

Nothing is more needed in our inquiries

after truth, than the watchful jealousy of a tender conscience. Yet how little is there of conscience at all in these last days! There is what is called independence of mind, or thinking for one's self; but that is not conscience. There is a spurning of creeds, and catechisms, and all olden theology, but that is not conscience. It is not waiting upon God for teaching. It is trusting our own heart, and taking the guidance of our own eyes. It is not "ceasing from man," but the mere pretence of it. It is ceasing from one man in order to trust in another, from one age to trust in another, from one book to trust in another, from one heart to trust in another, and that other perhaps the most deceitful of all,—our own. Hence there is such running after novelty, such readiness to receive any plausible error, such instability of opinion and fickleness of spirit; such self-willedness and headstrong precipitancy of judgment; such high-mindedness, pride, and censoriousness of others; so little thought of our own foolishness and fallibility; so slender a sense of the awful responsibility we are under to God, for what we believe for ourselves, and propagate among others, as his precious and eternal truth.

3. *There is little trembling at the word.*—It is a solemn thing for man to be spoken to by God, the God of heaven and earth. Each word coming from His lips should be listened to and received with profoundest reverence. "The Lord has spoken" is enough for us. There is no room for questions or cavil where His voice is heard. Each word in the Bible is to be dealt with as a sacred thing, a vessel of the sanctuary, not to be lightly handled or profanely mutilated, but to be received just as it stands. There may be passages difficult to reconcile, doctrines which apparently conflict with each other. But let us beware of smoothing down, or hammering in pieces, one class of passages, in order to bring about a reconciliation. Let us be content to take them as they are. We shall gain nothing by explaining them away. God has spoken them. God has placed them there. They cannot really be at variance with each other. The day is coming when we shall fully understand their harmony. Let us wait till then, and meanwhile tremble at the thought of misinterpreting or distorting so much as one jot or tittle. Most assuredly we shall not bring about the agreement in any such way. We are only wi-

dening the breach, and opening out new difficulties.*

If I am asked, how can you preach a free gospel, and yet believe in election? I answer, I believe in both, and preach both, because I find both in the Bible. I have no authority for preaching an unconditional gospel but what I find in the Bible; and I have the same authority for preaching an unconditional personal election. God has told me that both are true; and woe be to me if I profanely attempt to mutilate either the one or the other. If one man refuses to take the simple meaning of "election," another may refuse to take the simple meaning of "gospel." And were I called upon to say which is the worse, the more profane of the two, I should say the former. I should, indeed, tremble at the thought of denying either election or the gospel; but I confess that I think the denial of the latter a less direct, and a less daring insult to the sovereign majesty of Jehovah. It would be a shutting out of his grace, a closing up of all the manifestations of his character which have

* "The mind of that man has a strong bias to scepticism, who insists on having every difficulty satisfactorily explained before he will apply the sacred truths to himself."—*Henry (of America) Letters regarding the difficulties of an anxious inquirer: Letter IX.*

come out to us since Adam sinned; and it would be drawing a dark cloud over our eternal prospects,—but it would not be taking the reins of government out of his hands,—it would not be the usurpation of his throne,—it would not be giving the right hand of fellowship to atheism.

But there is no need of any such comparison. Perhaps it was wrong to make it. I have done so, however, in order that you may be led to see that *election* belongs to the highest and most sacred order of truths—that it is not a doctrine to be concealed and muffled as if we were either ashamed or afraid of it, but to be firmly held, and faithfully preached, whether men will hear or forbear. Mere philosophy might tell men that, if there be a God, he must be entirely and absolutely sovereign in all things. Mere philosophy might expose the shallowness and selfishness of those who trample on God's free will, in order to establish man's—even if theology and Scripture were silent on the matter.

Why do I believe in a free gospel? Is it because reason has revealed it? Is it because I find it suits me best? No. It is because God has declared it; that is my sole authority. Why do I believe in election? Just because

God has made it known. I may find that reason confirms this. I may see that there can be no really free gospel without election; but still my ground for believing it is because I find it most plainly revealed.

You can only get rid of election by getting rid of the Bible. And hence you will find, among those who deny election and the work of Christ for his church, a great dislike at those passages of Scripture which allude to these topics. They pass them by, they turn away from them, they are angry if another even quotes them, though without a comment. Now I ask, would they do and feel thus, if they believed that these passages really contained the meaning which they put upon them? If these passages are quite in harmony with their views, why do they shrink from quoting them, or hearing them quoted? Is not this the plainest of all proofs, that they feel that theirs is not the honest interpretation? Does it not show that they themselves are secretly persuaded that these passages do teach unconditional election, and the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah? They feel that they have twisted them from their plain sense, and that the mere reading of them is enough to expose their distortions. They feel that they have not dealt

fairly with the word of God, and that their one-sided dealings cannot bear the light of day.

Let us learn to "tremble at the word." Let us take it plainly and honestly in its simple sense. Let us not be afraid of its apparent contradictions. Let us not think ourselves capable of reconciling and harmonizing all its declarations. We see here but through a glass darkly. The day of light and harmony is coming. All shall then be plain. God will solve our difficulties. Meanwhile, let us reverence every jot and tittle of his holy word. Let us trust our own hearts and reasonings less, and God's word more. Let us not be so anxiously asking, *how* can this be? how can we reconcile God's sovereignty with man's responsibility? how can we harmonize the Spirit's free agency with man's free agency? Let us leave difficulties in the hands of God; and let us beware of making those difficulties greater by our miserable attempts to reach at things too high for us, or our more miserable efforts to pervert and mutilate the simple word of the God who cannot lie.

I do not mean, by any of these remarks, to imply that there is not the most perfect harmony between all the different doctrines taught

us in the Bible. Nor do I mean to say that this harmony is incapable of being discerned here. I believe, on the one hand, that all is harmony in the truths of God, and that that harmony is discernible and demonstrable even now. But still there is an *apparent* jar. To a certain extent we can reconcile every one of the supposed discordances. Yet there are difficulties connected with them which no theory can solve, and which will remain difficulties till the great day. To attempt to remove or reconcile these by denying the plain and natural sense of Scripture is sinful and pernicious. It accomplishes nothing. It only takes away one difficulty to replace it with a greater.

There are doubtless other causes of the evils over which we mourn; but these are the three chief roots of bitterness. To these may be traced more of the manifold errors of our day than many may be willing to allow. Till these are removed, I have little hope that the instability of the times will die out, or cease to operate for the injury and subversion of the truth. Till the soul gets *rest*—not the name, but the reality—and till the conscience is awake and sensitive, and till the Word of God is reverenced and honestly interpreted, I see small prospect of an end to these changes, if, indeed,

we may venture to hope that such can be until the Lord shall come.

Yet be not amazed. Jehovah changes not; neither does his word. It abideth forever, firm as the rocks of earth, undimmed as the azure of the heavens. Seek unto God for light, and to his Word for wisdom. Take his Holy Spirit as your teacher. Heed not the jar of men's warring opinions. Let God be true, and every man a liar. The Bible is the Bible still. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God. Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Do not be alarmed, as if all this were some new thing in the earth. Many speak as if truth had never arisen among men till they arose to teach it. But the errors of the day are those of former times. They have shot up once and again, and been so often silenced and put to shame. They are old and worn-out errors, though, perhaps, more daringly set forth now than heretofore; for the time seems at hand in which "the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard," and when false teachers and prophets shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Yet do not suppose the attainment of truth to be a hopeless thing. "The Son of God hath come, and hath given us an

understanding that we may know him that is true." It was He who taught the multitudes in the days of his flesh; and it is he who teacheth the multitude still. If he teaches not, all is vain and false; if he teaches, all is true, all is blessed. Light and knowledge are with him; and how willing is he that all that light and knowledge should be yours! Learn of me, he says, for I am meek and lowly; and to what teacher can a foolish, erring soul betake himself, like this meek and lowly one, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way? He received gifts for men, when he ascended on high, even for the rebellious; and to whom can you go, save to him who has the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts and graces so freely to bestow?

I am yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck."—1 Tim. i. 19.

"Of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."—2 Tim. iii. 6.

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away from the truth, and shall be turned into fables."—2 Tim. iv. 3.

"There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers."—Titus i. 10.

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."—Eph. iv. 14.

LETTER II.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES, CONTINUED.

"Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"—ISAIAH xlv. 9.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having stated what appears to me to be the origin of the theological opinions that are now trying to make way among us, I would briefly advert to some of the principles out of which they spring. I might at once have gone on to discuss the different points or opinions themselves; but I think it may be useful to notice some of the principles which they involve, or what may be called the general aspect and essence of these opinions. We have already seen the *soil* in which they flourish,—we shall forthwith proceed to advert to the branches and fruit; but, before doing so, it may be well to call attention to the *roots* of the tree.

Speaking generally of the new doctrines, and of the movement which has taken place in connection with them, we may affirm several things.

1. Man has too much to do with all this,—God too little. We hear much of what man does, and can do, and ought to do, but by no means so much of what God is doing, and has purposed to do. Man's agency stands very prominently out to view,—God's arm and power are hidden. It seems almost as if man would thrust aside God, take the reins of government out of his hands, and be to himself a god. Man gets much credit for doing and saying great things,—God gets little glory. The position of the sinner, *as a mere receiver of salvation*, and every blessing connected with it in this life or the next, is denied; and he is exalted to be a co-operator with God in the matter of salvation. He begins the work by becoming willing, and God ends it. He does what he can, and God does all the rest. He is represented as helping God to save him; or rather, we should say, God is represented as helping man to save himself! In the old creation, God did all; but in the new creation, as being a far more stupendous work, he requires the assistance of man,—nay, he commits half the work, at least the most difficult and momentous part of it, to man himself! If some of the new theories be true, God is not all in all, but is, on the contrary, considerably

indebted to man; and man, in like manner, is not a little indebted to himself. In all this, we hear still the whisperings of the old serpent, "Ye shall be as gods;" and we see man, like his first father, aspiring to the Divine prerogative.

2. Man's way, and not God's, is taken as the guide of action. God has a way, a plan, a purpose, well and wisely ordered. This plan, which he acts by, he has revealed, and he expects us to take it as our guide in all our schemes. This plan touches and rules things both great and small,—nations, communities, churches, with all their movements. Man's wisdom would be to search out this plan, and shape all his movements accordingly. Inattention to this must not only lead to fruitless efforts and unscriptural schemes, but to much false religion, self-will, formality, excitement, and sectarianism. God's design is to *glorify himself*,—to show to the whole universe what an infinitely glorious Being he is. This is his mighty end in all he does and says—to manifest himself and show forth his glory. For this, sin was allowed to enter the world; for this, the "Word was made flesh;" for this, the Son of God shed his blood and died; for this, He is taking out of this world a people to him-

self; to this all things are tending, and in this shall they be consummated ere long. Nothing less than this does God propose to himself in his doings; and nothing less than this should we ever make our aim and end. All things are but means to this one end. Even the incarnation of his own Son is but means toward an end, but not the end itself. The ingathering of his chosen ones is the means, not the end. The salvation of Israel, the conversion of the world, and the restitution of all things in the day of the coming kingdom, shall be the means, but not the end. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever."

Whenever we overlook this, we go wrong, and our efforts are but the beating of the air. When we make an end of anything lower than this, we are sure to fall into error; because, when we fix on *ends* of our own, we are certain to adopt *means* of our own. Take the case of the conversion of a soul. We cannot be too much in earnest about the saving even of one lost one. I believe we know almost nothing of that deep compassion and yearning love for a dying world which, as saints, we ought ever to feel.* Yet still it is quite possible to

* What an example, and, at the same time, what a re-

err in this matter,—not in being too earnest, but in being so intent on having men converted as to lose sight of the mighty *end* for which this is to be sought. Hence the glory of God is hidden from view; I do not say denied, but hidden from view. And what is the consequence? We cease to look at conversion in the light in which God regards it, as the way in which he is to be glorified. We think if we can but get men converted, it does not so much matter how. Our whole anxiety is, not how shall we secure the glory of Jehovah, but how shall we multiply conversions? The whole current of our thoughts and anxieties takes this direction. We cease to look at both things together; we think it enough to keep the one of them alone in our eye; and the issue is, that we soon find ourselves pursuing ways of our own. Bent upon compassing a particular object, we run recklessly forward, thinking that, as the object is right, anything

buke in regard to this is conveyed to us in Edwards' statement of the feelings of some during a time of revival. "There was found an universal benevolence to mankind, with a longing to embrace the whole world in the arms of pity and love. Sometimes a disposition was felt to a life given up to mourning alone in a wilderness over a lost and miserable world; compassion towards them being often to that degree that would allow of no support or rest but in going to God and pouring out the soul in prayer for them." *Works*, vol. i. p. 377.

that can contribute towards the securing of it cannot be wrong. We thus come to measure the correctness of our plans, simply by their seeming to contribute to our favorite aim. We estimate the soundness of our doctrine, not from its tendency to exalt and glorify Jehovah, but entirely by the apparent facility with which it enables us to get sinners to turn from their ways. The question is not asked concerning any doctrine, Is *it in itself* a God-honoring truth, but will it afford us facilities for converting souls? Will it make conversion a more easy thing,—a thing which a man may accomplish for himself and by himself? Will it make conversion less dependent upon God, and more dependent upon man? Will it make a man's salvation to hinge less purely and solely upon the will of Jehovah, and more entirely upon the will of the sinner himself? Will it enable us to meet such a text as—"No man can come unto me unless the Father draw him;" "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"

The man who thinks of nothing but how he may (as he calls it) get sinners converted, is continually apt to take these devious courses.

Impelled but by one force, in one direction, from one motive, he soon errs and loses himself in mazy thickets, which, as he plunges on, thicken into deeper intricacy and darkness. Such texts as these present themselves and cross his path. Intent on but one thing, he either shuns them or treads them down. They are incompatible with his *one* idea,—they seem to impede him in the pursuit of his one end. And therefore they must be got quit of. It does not occur to ask, Am I not looking at objects in a partial light, from too low a position, and with a false bias which unfits me for coming to a right judgment? Were such a question but asked and answered as it ought, there would be less of one-sided doctrines, mis-shapen systems, got up to accomplish a favorite and engrossing object. Were the glory of the infinite Jehovah seen in its true light, as the mightiest and most majestic of all objects and ends, not to the exclusion of other matters, but simply to their regulation and subordination,—then should we be saved the pain of seeing men rushing headlong over Scripture and reason, striking out strange by-paths of their own, in their eager pursuit of an object on which they have fixed an exclusive and partial eye.

I do not wonder at men, who either have lost sight of the glory of Jehovah or have made it a subordinate object, or who think that if they can only get men converted, God will look after his own glory,—I do not wonder at them being fretted when such texts as those I have referred to, confront them in their schemes for facilitating conversion, and making man the converter of himself. A man with only one object in view, and that not the highest, must be stumbled at such declarations, and feel at a loss to reconcile them with others. But the man who has set his heart upon the glory of his God, and views everything in relation to that, feels no such difficulty. He takes Scripture as he finds it. He has no need to explain away even one verse or clause of the Book of Truth. He enters into the purpose of God; he looks at things in the light in which God looks at them. He tries to see them as they might have appeared in the long past eternity,—or as they will yet appear in the eternity to come. And he finds all harmony. There is no conflict, no discord at all. One class of passages show him the yearnings of God's heart over sinful man. They show him that God is in earnest in beseeching men to come to him; that he really means what he

says when he makes proposals of friendship and reconciliation to them. They show him that the sinner's unbelief is the cause of his damnation; and that if he is lost, it is not because God would not be reconciled to him, but because he would not be reconciled to God. They show him that the water of life is *free;* free to every man; free to every sinner as he stands; and that he is invited to partake, without price or preparation, not only *although* he is a sinner, but just *because* he is a sinner. They show him these things, and in them he greatly rejoices. He does not wish to abate one jot of the blessed freeness, or cloud by one restriction the joy of the glad tidings. No. He takes these passages just as he finds them. He sees how suitable they are to one of the objects on which his heart is set,—I mean the conversion of souls. But then he finds another class of passages which follow out another line of truth. They will run him up at once into the purpose and will of Jehovah as the fount and cause of everything great or small. They are quite explicit; just as much so as the other. He cannot explain them away. They are so plain and simple, that a child may see what they mean. He has no wish to take them in any other than their obvious sense.

He sees in them that which exactly meets his own feelings, and coincides with his view of God's glory as being the paramount and all-regulating end in all the movements of the universe. He sees in them not a restriction upon the gospel, but the simple statement of an infinite truth—a truth not arbitrarily thrown across the sinner's path as a stumbling-block, but a truth necessarily arising from the fact that God is God, the Creator, and that man is man, the creature, the sinner. That truth is just this, that God's will is the law of the universe,—his glory the object and end both in creation and in redemption—his everlasting purpose the mighty and all-perfect mould in which all things are cast, and from which they take their shape and fashion from first to last. In such passages he sees God pointing out to men the true end which they ought to have in view, and by which all their movements are to be regulated. In them he sees God setting a fence and guard around his own majesty, lest men should imagine that their will is everything, their salvation God's only end, and that in the gospel He has thrown the reins of this fallen earth into the sinner's hands, telling him that everything depends upon his own will and power, and that he has but to put forth that

will and power in order to save himself, and restore a ruined world to the perfection of its former beauty.

Whenever we lose sight of God's great end in all things—his own glory,—we fall into a wrong track. We go wrong in judging of doctrine; we go wrong in the formation of our plans; we go wrong in the bent of our efforts; we miscalculate the relative importance of different truths. Thus our whole tone of feeling, judging, and working, is lowered and contracted. Zeal for our own ways and opinions takes the place of higher aims. A revival is got up to propagate these opinions, or to prop up a sect. Sectarianism and selfish exclusiveness steal in. Egotism, boasting, censoriousness are introduced. Religion becomes an instrument for working out our own views and ends. The most solemn and spiritual things are spoken of with levity and irreverence. Conversion soon becomes the same as the holding of certain opinions, and the mark of an unconverted man is, that he rejects these opinions. Being loosened from their anchorage, men drift away without a guide. One doctrine after another is embraced, and change succeeds change, as month follows month. To make conversion easy is the great object; and

to accomplish this particular end, favorite passages are dwelt upon incessantly, doctrine after doctrine smoothed over, and text after text pared away.

And after all this toil and change, what is the issue? Is anything gained? Nothing. Scripture has been perverted, man all but deified, and God all but dethroned,—but has any difficulty been cleared off, have contradictions been harmonized? No. One class of difficulties has been substituted for another, that is all. The new system gets quit of the alleged contradictions of the old, only to substitute others of its own of a more serious kind. If for instance I deny that Christ is truly God, I certainly get quit of the mystery of the incarnation, but I land myself in endless scriptural difficulties, for the passages which declare his divinity are numerous and explicit.* In like manner, by denying the *direct* operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of the sinner, I get quit of certain apparent difficulties about man's free agency and responsibility, but I

* If, to take another instance, I deny the pre-millennial advent, and personal reign of Christ, I rid myself of some things which I find hard to be understood, or even conceived of, things which appear to some low, carnal, derogatory to Christ,—but I call up a whole host of scriptural difficulties which are far more formidable.

substitute for these most serious difficulties as to man's utter depravity, and as to the personal agency and operation of the Spirit. But *old* difficulties are to some minds so stale and threadbare as not to be endurable. *New* difficulties recommend themselves by their freshness and novelty. To get quit of a single old one, some would welcome a hundred new ones.

From such roots many other evils spring, which I cannot here enumerate. There is often manifested a narrow-mindedness, a contraction of the spiritual eye, and a limitation of the spiritual horizon, which is apt to end in engrossing selfishness. Hence, we often see greater zeal to proselytize to a sect than to win men to Christ. We see great activity displayed in making known and forcing upon others the points on which the difference exists, and much less concern about propagating those in which all believers are agreed. We hear much talking about doctrines and peculiarities, little about Christ himself. We find conversation turning too much upon the spiritual state of others, and that often in flippancy or censoriousness,—this one being pronounced unconverted, that other converted,—this one being mentioned as having joined the sect, or that other as being inclined to join it, or that

other again as standing aloof. We find discussions arising as to whom this one was awakened under, or whom this other, as if this were a matter of any moment, provided the soul be saved, and Jesus glorified. We find people extolling the exploits of their ministers, or the doings of their sect, numbering up the conversions that took place at this or that revival, under this or that minister, in this or that town or village.

How much is there in all this of selfishness and sectarianism! how little of simple zeal for the glory of the name of Jesus! A taste for religious gossip, in which the spiritual state of others is freely canvassed, criticized, and decided on, is a very different thing from that relish for the things of God and Christ, which shows itself in the saint by the delight which he takes in truly spiritual converse on things pertaining to God and his glory, to Jesus and his love.—I am, yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt."—Job xi. 12.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."—Prov. xvi. 4.

"Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel."—Jer. xviii. 6.

"Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"—Rom. ix. 20.

NOTE.

As a specimen of the way in which plain texts are twisted, we refer to Rom. ix. 15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c. This they venture to translate, "I will have mercy on whom I *can* have mercy,"—that is, "I will have mercy on those on whom I *can* consistently with righteousness have mercy." Now I say without hesitation, that such is *not* the meaning of the Greek words. Men have wrung this meaning out of them because it was the only way in which they could destroy their explicit testimony to Jehovah's sovereignty. But no *scholar* will ever say that such is their meaning. If any doubt existed as to this, Paul removes it completely in the 18th verse, by giving us his comment upon them, "therefore hath he mercy on whom he WILLETH," not on whom he *can* merely, but on whom he WILLETH. Even though they might succeed in thrusting *can* into the words of Moses, they must admit that Paul is explicit enough. And will not his testimony suffice? Lest, however, our statement should be suspected, we add higher authority, which is beyond suspicion. Grotius, an old commentator, whose dislike to Calvinism makes his testimony the more impartial, translates it exactly as in our version, and illustrates the statement by referring to the way in which kings issue orders according to their pleasure, without making known their reasons. Limborch, also, another Arminian divine, takes precisely the same view. Wolfius, another divine of the same class, when referring to one critic who wished to substitute *can* for *will*, makes this remark—"I would not, however, depart from the interpretation of the Septuagint, which Paul has here approved of, and which the connection of Paul's discourses seems to require." I observe also, that a modern Neologian, or at least semi-Neologian critic, Kuttner, takes the same view. He denies the doctrine of personal and unconditional election, maintaining, with others of his own stamp, that it is a *national* election that is spoken of, yet he has no hesitation about the meaning of

the 15th verse. The substitution of the *can* for the *will* does not seem to have occurred to him. He interprets honestly, and as a scholar. The sense, says he, is, "I will show kindness to whom I will to show kindness," *beneficiis afficiam cui benefacere volo* (see his *Hypomnemata* upon the New Testament, p. 243.) I might have quoted other Arminian commentators to the same effect. But I need not. These are enough. We see what honest men and scholars think of the passage. Even when wishing to bend it to their theory, they cannot. Even when alluding to the very interpretation now sought to be put upon it, they refuse to allow it to be either possible or tenable. They at once set aside the *can*, as not only not admissible according to the rules of criticism, but as positively discountenanced by the apostle's interpretation of the words of Moses. It is somewhat strange to see the Arminians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the Neologians of the nineteenth, united in this view, and the authors of the new theology setting themselves against it. Are the latter better critics and scholars than the former? No man will assert that. Of criticism and scholarship they seem to know almost nothing; yet, with strange self-confidence, they insist upon trying their hand at new translations, and boldly asserting them to be true and right in the face of all critics and scholars, ancient and modern. How is this? These old critics, though Arminian, were really scholars, and had some reputation to sustain, which might have been materially damaged had they ventured upon any gross perversions of the original. Modern divines who have no such name to uphold, may do what they like with the Greek. They have nothing to lose, even though their attempts at criticism should betray their ignorance of the language. And again, we fear that the Arminianism of the present day is really of a *lower grade* than that of former centuries. Most of the Arminians of the seventeenth century would have abhorred the ultra-Pelagianism of the present day. The tone of doctrine being lowered, the tone of interpretation has of necessity become laxer and more pliable.

LETTER III.

GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL.

"Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel."—JER. xviii. 6.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Much of the present controversy is concerning *the will of God.* On this point many questions have arisen. The chief one, I think, is that which touches on the connection between the will of God and the will of man. What is the relation between these? What is the order in which they stand to each other? Which is the first?

There is no dispute as to the existence of these two separate wills. There is a will in God, and there is also a will in man. Both of these are in continual exercise;—God willeth, and man willeth. Nothing in the universe takes place without the will of God. This is admitted. But it is asked, Is this will *first* in everything?

I answer, Yes. Nothing that is good can exist which God did not will to be, and noth-

ing that is evil can exist which God did not will to allow.* The will of God goes before all other wills. It does not depend on them, but they depend on it. Its movements regulate them. The "I will" of Jehovah, is that which sets in motion everything in heaven and in earth. The "I will" of Jehovah, is the spring and origin of all that is done throughout the universe, great or small, among things animate or inanimate. It was this "I will" that brought angels into being, and still sustains them. It was this "I will" that brought this world into being, and still sustains it. It was this "I will" that was the origin of salvation to a lost world. It was this "I will" that provided a Redeemer, and accomplished redemption. It is this "I will" that begins, and carries on, and ends salvation in each soul that

* It seems to be thought by some, that if we hold the good to be the result of God's direct will, we must hold the evil also. But why so? All of us admit that God willed the world to be; and it was. There is no question as to that. But must we hold, also, that God in the same sense, and in the same way, willed that world to fall into ruins? No. He simply willed to allow it to fall. So with reference to the moral and spiritual world. The existence of holiness is the result of his direct decretive will, the existence of ungodliness is the result of his indirect permissive will. For nothing surely can come to pass save what God either wills to be or wills to allow to be. His will must, either directly or indirectly, enter into everything. Otherwise he would not be Jehovah.

is redeemed. It is this "I will" that opens the blind eye, and unstops the deaf ear. It is this "I will" that awakens the slumberer, and raises the dead. I do not mean merely that, generally speaking, God has declared his will concerning these things: but each individual conversion, nay, and each movement that forms part of it, originates in this supreme "I will." When Jesus healed the leper, he said, "I will, be thou clean;" so when a soul is converted, there is the same distinct and special forth-putting of the Divine will, "I will, be thou converted." Everything that can be called good in man, or in the universe, originates in the "I will" of Jehovah.

I do not deny that in conversion man himself wills. In everything that he does, thinks, feels, he of necessity wills. In believing he wills; in repenting he wills; in turning from his evil ways he wills. All this is true. The opposite is both untrue and absurd. But while fully admitting this, there is another question behind it of great interest and moment. Are these movements of man's will towards good the effects of the forth-putting of God's will? Is man willing, because he has made himself so, or because God has made him so? Does he become willing en-

tirely by an act of his own, or by chance, or by moral suasion, or because acted on by created causes and influences from without?

I answer unhesitatingly, he becomes willing, because another and a superior will, even that of God, has come into contact with his, altering its nature and its bent. This new bent is the result of a change produced upon it by him who alone, of all beings, has the right, without control, to say, in regard to all events and changes, "I will." The man's will has followed the movement of the Divine will. God has made him willing. God's will is *first* in the movement, not second. Even a holy and perfect will depends for guidance upon the will of God.* Even when renewed it still *follows*, it does not *lead*. Much more an unholy will, for its bent must first be changed; and how can this be, if God is not to interpose his hand and power?

But is not this to make God the author of sin? No. It does not follow that because God's will originates what is *good* in man, that it must therefore originate what is *evil*. The existence of a holy, happy world, proves that God had created it with his own hand.

* Whether it does so in the same way as in the case of an imperfect and partially renewed will, I do not discuss.

The existence of an unholy, unhappy world, proves that God *allowed it to fall into that state*:—but it proves nothing more. We are told that Jesus was delivered by "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." God's will was there. God permitted that deed of darkness to be done; nay, it was the result of his "determinate counsel." But does that prove that God was the author of the sin of either Judas or Herod? Had it not been for the eternal "I will" of Jehovah, Christ would not have been delivered up; but does this prove that God compelled either Judas to betray, or Herod to mock, or Pilate to condemn, the Lord of Glory? Still further, it is added in another place, "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together FOR TO DO WHATSOEVER THY HAND AND THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE DONE." Is it possible to pervert this passage so as to prove that it has no reference to predestination? Yet does it make God the author of the deed referred to? Must God be the author of sin, because it is said that Israel and the Gentiles "were gathered together to do what his counsel had determined?" Let

our opponents attempt an explanation of such a passage, and tell us how it can be made to harmonize with their theory.

It may be argued in opposition to this that God works by means, in changing the will. "There is no need, it will be said, that there should be the special and direct forthputting of his will and strength. He has ordained the means, he has given his word, he has proclaimed his gospel, and by these means he effects the change. His will does not come directly into contact with ours. He leaves it to these instruments to effect the change." Well, let us see what amount of truth there may be in this. I suppose no one will say that the gospel can produce the alteration in the will so long as the will rejects it. No medicine, however excellent, can operate unless it be taken. The will of man then rejects the gospel; it is set against the truth of God. How then is it made to receive it? Granting that in receiving it there is a change, yet the question is, How was it so far changed already as to be willing to receive it? The worst feature of the malady is the determination *not* to touch or taste the medicine; and how is this to be overcome? Oh! it will be said, this resistance is to be overcome with ar-

guments. Arguments! Is not the gospel itself the great argument? and it is rejected. What arguments can you expect to prevail with a man that refuses the gospel? Admit that there are other arguments, yet the man is set against them all. There is not one argument that can be used which he does not hate. His will resists and rejects every persuasive and motive. How then is this resistance to be overcome,—this opposition to be made to give way? How is the bent of the will to be so altered as to receive that which it rejected? Plainly by his will coming into contact with a superior one,—a will that can remove the resistance,—a will such as that which said, "Let there be light, and there was light." The will itself must undergo a change before it can choose that which it rejected. And what can change it but the finger of God?

Were man's rejection of the gospel simply occasioned by his misunderstanding it, then I can see how, upon its being made plain, resistance would cease. But I do not believe that such is the case; for what does it amount to but just that the sinner never rejects the *truth*, it is only error which he rejects, and were his mistake rectified, he would at once embrace

the truth! The unrenewed man, then, so far from having enmity to the truth, has the very opposite! So little of depravity is there in his heart, and so little perversity in his will—such instinctive love of truth and abhorrence of error is there in him, that as soon as the truth is made plain to him, he embraces it! All his previous hesitation arose from the errors which had been mingled with the truth presented! One would think that this was anything but depravity. It might be ignorance, but it could not be called enmity to the truth, it is rather enmity to error. It would thus appear that the chief feature of the sinner's heart and will is not enmity to truth, but hatred to error and love of truth! *

Man's heart is enmity to God,—*to God as revealed in the gospel*,—to God as the God of grace and love. What truth then can there be in the assertion that all the sinner's dis-

* If this system be true, for what is a sinner to be condemned? Not for rejecting the gospel. That he neither did nor could do according to this theory. It was error that he rejected, not truth. Had the truth been properly presented to him, he would not have resisted! Had he but known the truth he would have received it. Rejection of the gospel is undoubtedly the great condemning sin. But how can it be so, if this new doctrine be true? The gospel, it is said, needs but to be known in order to its being embraced. How then can it ever be knowingly rejected? It may be rejected in ignorance, but this is no proper rejection; nor is it such a rejection as could in justice be the ground of condemnation.

trust of God and darkness of spirit arise from his not seeing God as the God of love? I grant that oftentimes this is the case. I know that it is very frequently misapprehension of God's gracious character, as seen and pledged in the cross of Jesus, that is the cause of darkness to the anxious soul, and that a simple sight of the exceeding riches of the grace of God would dispel these clouds; but that is very different from saying that such a sight, apart from the renewing energy of the Spirit upon the soul, would change man's enmity into confidence and love. For we know that the unrenewed will is set against the *gospel;* it is enmity to God and his truth. The more closely and clearly truth is set before it, and pressed home upon it, its hatred swells and rises. The presentation of truth, however forcible and clear, even though that truth were the love of God in Christ, will only exasperate the unconverted man. It is the gospel that he hates; and the more clearly it is set before him he hates it the more. It is God that he hates; and the more closely that God approaches him, the more vividly that God is set before Him, the more does his enmity awaken and augment. Surely, then, that which stirs up enmity cannot of itself remove

it? If I hate a man, and hate him all the more because he loves me, would it not be absurd to say, that the knowledge of his love would at once subdue my hatred? The knowledge of his love is the chief thing that causes my hatred, how can it then take it away? Of what avail, then, are the most energetic means *by themselves?* The will itself must be directly operated upon by the Spirit of God: He who made it must re-make it. Its making was the work of Omnipotence: its re-making must be the same. In no other way can its evil bent be rectified. God's will must come into contact with man's will, and then the work is done. Must not God's will then be first in every such movement? Man's will follows; it cannot lead.

Is this a hard saying? So some in these days would have us to believe. Let us ask wherein consists its hardness. Is it hard that God's will should take the precedence of man's? Is it hard that God's will should be the leader and man's the follower in all things great and small? Is is hard that we should be obliged to trace the origin of every movement of man towards good to the will of a sovereign Jehovah?

If it be hard, it must be that it strips man

of every fragment of what is good, or of the slightest tendency to good. And this we believe to be the secret origin of the complaint against the doctrine. It is a thorough leveller and emptier of man. It makes him not only nothing, but worse than nothing,—a sinner all over,—nothing but a sinner, with a heart full of enmity to God, set against him as the God of righteousness, and still more set against him as the God of love, with a will so bent away from the will of God, and so rebellious against it, as not to have one remaining inclination to what is good, and holy, and spiritual. This he cannot tolerate. Admit that man is totally worthless and helpless, and where is the hard saying? Is it hard that God's blessed and holy will should go before our miserable and unholy wills, to lead them in the way? Is it hard that those who have nothing should be indebted for everything to God? Is it hard, seeing that every movement of my will is downwards, earthwards, that God's mighty will should come in and lift it omnipotently upwards, heavenwards?

If God's will were an *obstruction* to mine, there might be something hard in the doctrine of Jehovah's sovereignty. If the latent relics of goodness in me were thwarted by God, or

at least disregarded by him, there would be something hard indeed. But when his will never interferes with mine, save to arrest its downward course, what can be less hard, or more blessed than this?

If I admit that God's will regulates the great movements of the universe, I must admit that it equally regulates the small. It *must* do this, for the great depend upon the small. The minutest movement of my will is regulated by the will of God. And in this I rejoice. Woe is me if it be not so. If I shrink from such unlimited control and guidance, it is plain that I dislike the idea of being wholly at the disposal of God.* I am wishing to be in part at my own disposal. I am ambitious of regulating the lesser movements of my will, while I give up the greater to his control. And thus it comes out that I wish to be a god to myself. I do not like the thought of God having all the disposal of my destiny. If he gets his will, I

* "The sovereignty of God is so offensive to the proud heart of man, that every expedient of artifice has been employed to banish it from the Bible. But no expedient has succeeded. The sovereignty of Jehovah meets us in every page of the Bible. Nothing more strongly shows the enmity of the human heart to this part of the Divine character, (sovereignty,) than the forced attempts of learning and ingenuity to expel it from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans."—Carson (Dublin) *on the knowledge of Jesus the most excellent of the sciences*, p. 215.

am afraid that I shall not get mine. It comes out, moreover, that the God about whose love I was so fond of speaking, is a God to whom I cannot trust myself implicitly for eternity. Yes, this is the real truth. *Man's dislike at God's sovereignty arises from his suspicion of God's heart.* And yet the men in our day, who deny this absolute sovereignty, are the very men who profess to rejoice in the love of God,—who speak of that love as if there were nothing else in God but love. The more I understand of the character of God, as revealed in Scripture, the more shall I see that he *must* be sovereign, and the more shall I rejoice from my inmost heart that he is so.

It was God's sovereign will that fixed the time of my birth. It is the same will that has fixed the day of my death. And was not the day of my conversion fixed as certainly by that same will? Or will any but "the fool" say that God has fixed by his will the day of our birth and death, but leaves us to fix the day of our conversion by our own will; that is, leaves us to decide whether we shall be converted or not, whether we shall believe or not? If the day of conversion be fixed, then it cannot be left to be determined by our own will. God determined, where and when, and how we

should be born, and so he has determined where, and when, and how we shall be born again. If so, his will must go before ours in believing; and it is just because his will goes before ours that we become willing to believe. Were it not for this, we would never have believed at all.* If man's will precedes God's will in everything relating to himself, then I do not see how any of God's plans or purposes can be carried into effect. Man would be left to manage the world in his own way. God must not fix the time of his conversion, for that would be an interference with man's responsibility. Nay, he must not fix that he shall be converted at all, for that must be left to himself and to his own will. He must not fix how many are to be converted, for that would be making his own invitation a mere mockery, and man's responsibility a pretence. He may turn a stray star into its course again by a direct forth-putting of power, and be unchallenged for interference with the laws of nature. But to stretch out his arm and arrest a human will

* James i. 18, "*Of his own will he begat us through the word of truth.*" This is literally in the original, "having willed or purposed, he begat us, or brought us forth." Thus there are two things specially shown us here. First, that it is God who begets us; and, secondly, that he does so on account of a previous purpose of his own.

in its devious course, so as to turn it back again to holiness, is an unwarrantable exercise of his power, and an encroachment upon man's liberty! What a world! where man gets all his own way,—where God is not allowed to interfere, except in the way that man calls lawful! What a world! where everything turns upon man's will;—where the whole current of events in the world or in the church is regulated, shaped, impelled by man's will alone. God's will is but a secondary thing. Its part is to watch events, and follow in the track of man's! Man wills, and God must say—Amen!

In all this opposition to the absolute will of God, we see the self-will of the last days manifesting itself. Man wanted to be a god at the first, and he continues the struggle to the last. He is resolved that his will shall take the precedence of God's. In the last Antichrist, this self-will shall be summed up and manifested. He is the king, that is, to do "according to his will." And in the free-will controversy of the day, we see the same spirit displayed. It is Antichrist that is speaking to us, and exhorting us to proud independence. Self-will is the essence of anti-christianism. Self-will is the root of bitterness, that is springing up in

the churches in these days. And it is not from above, it is from beneath. It is earthly, sensual, devilish.—I am, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."—Ex. xxxiii. 19.

"I, even I am he, and there is no God with me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."—Deut. xxxii. 39.

"Behold he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening."—Job xii. 14.

"When he gives quietness, who can give trouble? and when he hideth, who can behold him?"—Job xxxiv. 29.

"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"—Dan. iv. 35.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according TO HIS OWN PURPOSE and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."—2 Tim. i. 9.

NOTE.

We are told that the doctrine of God's sovereignty has a most deadening effect. Now, it is remarkable that all the revivals in America during last century were under ministers who held this doctrine very rigidly. President Edwards is an instance of this. Few have been so extensively blessed, yet he preached it most unreservedly. He was preaching on it during the great revival at Northampton, when three hundred were converted in less than six months. Nay, it was under some of his sermons on God's absolute sovereignty that the awakenings took place. The nature of this glorious work will appear from the following sentences:—"A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion became universal in all parts of the town, (a town

of four thousand.) The noise of the dry bones waxed louder and louder; all other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by. There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world." Is this setting souls asleep, or damping the work of God? I may add, that it was at this time also that he printed his sermon entitled, "A Divine and Supernatural Light immediately imparted to the Soul by the Spirit of God," &c.

LETTER IV.

ELECTION.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—MATT. xxii. 14.
"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."—ACTS xiii. 48.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You know what a very prominent place in Scripture the doctrine of election holds. It meets us everywhere, both in the Old and New Testament. Whatever may be the meaning of the word, one cannot help feeling that the truth which it expresses must, in God's sight, be a vitally important one.

But how can this be the case, if it mean no more than God's choosing those that choose him? If it mean no more than God's choosing those who he foresaw would believe of their own accord and by their own power, it is not worthy of the prominent place it holds in Scripture; nay, it is not worthy of a separate name, least of all of such a name as election. If there be any election at all in such a case, it is plainly not God's election of man, but man's election of God. So that the ques-

tion comes to be simply this, Does election mean God's choosing man, or man's choosing God? It cannot mean both; it must either be the one or the other. Which of the two can any reasonable being suppose it to mean?*

* As the right understanding of this word is of great importance, I think it well to note down a few passages, which will help to shed light upon the meaning of the word.

"The man's rod, whom *I shall choose*, shall blossom."—Num. xvii. 5.

"Thou shalt set him King over thee, whom the Lord thy God *shall choose*."—Deut. xvii. 15.

"Did I *choose him out* of all the tribes of Israel."—1 Sam. ii. 28.

"The place which the Lord *hath chosen*, to put his name there."—Deut. xii. 21.

"Them the Lord thy God *hath chosen* to minister unto him."—Deut. xxi. 5.

"Jerusalem, the city which I have *chosen out of* all the tribes of Israel."—1 Kings xi. 32.

"The Lord *chose* me, before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel."—1 Chron. xxviii. 4.

"He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but *chose* the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion that he loved."—Ps. lxxviii. 67, 68.

"Many are called, but few are *chosen*.—Matt. xx. 16.

"For his elect's sake, whom he hath *chosen*."—Mark xiii. 20.

"He is a *chosen* vessel unto me."—Acts ix. 15.

"I know whom I have *chosen*."—John xiii. 18.

"Ye have not *chosen* me, but I have *chosen* you."—John xv. 16.

"According as he hath *chosen us* in him before the foundation of the world."—Eph. i. 4.

"God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation."—2 Thess. ii. 13.

These are but a few out of the many passages that might have been chosen. But they are quite enough to show the meaning of the word. No one who wishes to take words plainly as he finds them, can find any difficulty in understanding what choosing or election means, after reading such passages as these.

I would just ask, What does the word mean in common speech? When we speak of the election of a member of parliament, does that mean that the member first chose himself, and then the people chose him, because he had chosen himself? Or when we speak of the election of a minister, do we mean that he first chose himself, and then the people chose him, because he had chosen himself? No such theory of election would be listened to for a moment in such matters. Election has but one meaning there. It means the people's choosing their representative by a distinct act of their own will, or the congregation choosing their minister by an equally distinct act of their own will. And shall man have his will, and shall not God have his? Shall man have his choice, and shall not God have his?

But let us take an instance from the Bible. What does God's choosing of Abraham mean? He is a specimen of a sinner saved by grace; a sinner called out of the world by God. Well, how did this choosing take place? Did not God think of him long before he ever thought of God? Did not God choose him long before he ever thought of choosing God? Were there not thousands more in Chaldea

that God might have chosen, and called, and saved, had he pleased? Yet he chose Abraham alone. And what does the Bible call this procedure on the part of God? It calls it *election*. "Thou art the Lord, the God who didst *choose* Abraham, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees."—Nehem. ix. 7. Does any one say, O, but God chose Abraham, because he foresaw that Abraham would choose him. I answer, the case is precisely the reverse of this. He chose Abraham just because he saw that otherwise Abraham would *not* choose him. It was God's foreseeing that Abraham would *not* choose him, that made election necessary. And so it is with every sinner. So it is with us. God chooses us, not because he foresees that we would choose him, or that we would believe, but for the very opposite reason. He chooses us just because he foresees that we would neither choose him nor believe of ourselves at all. Election proceeds not upon foreseen *faith* in us, but upon foreseen *unbelief*.

The truth is, that election has no meaning, if it be not the expression of God's will in reference to particular persons and things,—saying to each, thus and thus shalt thou be, not because thou choosest to be so, but because

I, the infinite Jehovah, see fit that thou shouldest be so. To one creature he says, thou shalt be an angel, to another thou shalt be a man. To one order of beings, thou shalt dwell in heaven, to another, thou shalt dwell on earth. To one man, thou shalt be born in Judea, where my name is named and my temple stands; to another, thou shalt be born in Egypt, or Babylon, where utter darkness reigns. To one he says, thou shalt be born in Britain, and hear the glad tidings; to another, thou shalt be born in Africa, where no gospel has ever come. Thus he expresses his will, and who can resist it? Who can find fault, or say to him, what doest thou? Men may object at being placed thus entirely at the disposal of God, but the apostle's answer to such is, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Election, then, is the distinct forthputting of God's sovereign will, for the purpose of bringing a thing to pass, which, bnt for the explicit forthgoing of that will, would not have come to pass.

But does this not lead to the conclusion that *sin* is the direct result of God's decree? Does it not teach us that it is God and not man that produces sin? No. God does not foreordain sin. But he decrees to *allow* man to

sin. God is holy, and hates sin. He does not lead men into it; neither does he decree to lead men into it. But he decrees that, for infinitely wise ends, the creature should be permitted to fall, and sin be perpetuated.

Men argue, that if we contend for God's fore-ordination at all, we must hold that he fore-ordains everything *in the same way*. They try to reduce the question to an absurdity, by affirming, that if God pre-determine to do the good, he must also predetermine to do the evil; that if he decrees that one man shall be a saint, he must also decree that another man shall be a sinner. To this I would reply as follows, in addition to what I have already observed in another place:

1. God forces no man to sin, either by what he decrees or what he does, either by commanding or constraining or alluring.

2. It is absurd to say, that if we hold that God is the author of the good, he must therefore be the author of the evil; that if he, from eternity, purposed to create what is good in man, he must therefore have purposed to create what is evil. It is absurd to say, that if I hold that it is God who sets my will *right*, I must hold that it was God who set it *wrong*.

3. We know that there is such a thing as a particular providence which numbers the very hairs of our head, whose eye marks even the fall of a sparrow. But must we therefore maintain that this special providence is the source of all that is evil as well as all that is good? Not a sparrow falleth without our Father, it is said. Must we then hold that God caused the death of the sparrow? Not a man dies without God. Must we therefore maintain that God slew him? God fixed the time of Christ's death beforehand, with all the circumstances and persons connected with it. Perhaps the modern opposers of predestination will not admit that Christ's death was fixed by God from all eternity; but they will at least grant that it must have been fixed from the era of Daniel, who predicted the year. If God then fore-ordained the death of Christ, did he fore-ordain the sin, and compel men to commit it? No. He fore-ordained the event, and he fore-ordained to allow wicked men to perpetrate it. But he led no one into the sin; nor does he condemn it the less. This one illustration is enough to settle the whole matter. Here is an event acknowledged by all to be fore-ordained—the death of Christ. Did this fore-ordination make God to commit the

sin, or render the murderers less guilty? No. Yet our opponents, according to their theory, must hold either that Christ's death was not fore-ordained of God at all, or else that God, and not man, is chargeable with the sin of his crucifixion. According to them, Herod and Pilate will be unjustly condemned, for doing only what God had decreed should be done.

4. God frequently gave predictions of evil long before the time. Of course, then, if evil be predicted regarding either nations or individuals, it must be fixed and sure. He predicted the curse on Canaan and his descendants. But does that prove that he delighted in the curse, or that he was the author of it, or that those who were the instruments of inflicting it, and so fulfilling the prophecy, were guiltless?

5. When we say that God fixes beforehand the time and circumstances of a person's birth and conversion and death,—the place and the condition which he is to occupy, our opponents tell us that we might as well say that it is God's decree that makes us sinners. When we say, God decreed that Gabriel should be kept from falling, and remain an angel forever, they tell us that this is just to say that God resolved that Lucifer should be a devil, and

when the time came, he made him one. According to these strange inferences, God is not to be allowed to allocate heaven to angels, and earth to man as his seat; he is not to be allowed to "set the bounds of our habitations," so that one man shall be born in England and another in Africa. He is not to be allowed to appoint the time of our birth, or our conversion, or our death; nor is he to be permitted to fix our country, or our habitation, or our circumstances; because if he is allowed to fix these things, he must fix all the rest,—the destinies of eternity as well as the affairs of time.

6. Even our opponents admit that there are some events decreed beforehand, such as the birth and the death of Christ, the judgment-day, &c. If, then, they admit that he has decreed a single event, they are in precisely the same difficulty in which they seek to fix us. If one event is decreed, why not all? Who is to draw the line and say, these are decreed, but those are not? God's will has already fixed one or two, and is man's will, or chance, to settle all the rest?

In farther explanation of this point, let me quote a few paragraphs from a tract which I published some years ago. It was written be-

fore the "new light" dawned; and the present controversies have only tended to deepen the sense I then had of the importance of the truth contained in it.*

I know that the sinner must have a *will* in the matter, too. It is an absurdity to speak of a sinner loving, believing, &c., against his will, or by compulsion. The sinner must doubtless *will*. He must will to refuse, and he must will to receive Christ. He must will to take the broad way, and he must will to take the narrow way. His will is essential to all these movements of his soul. But in what state do we find his will at present? We find it wholly set against the truth. Every will, since the fall, is wholly opposed to God and his word. Man needs no foreign influence, no external power, to make him reject the truth. That he does by nature. He hates it with his whole heart. When a sinner then comes to receive the truth, how is this accomplished? Does he renew himself? Does he change the enmity of his will by an unaided act of his will? Does he of himself bend back his own will into the opposite direction? Does he, by a word of his own power, cause the current

* See Note at the end of the chapter.

that had been flowing down the hill to change its course and flow upward? Does his own will originate the change in itself, and carry that change into effect? Impossible. The current would have flowed forever downward had it not been arrested in its course by something stronger than itself. The sinner's will would have remained forever in depravity and bondage, had not another will, mightier far than itself, come into contact with it, and altered both its *nature* and its *course*, working in the sinner "both to will and to do." Was the sinner willing *before* this other will met his? No. Was he willing after? Yes. Then, is it not plain that it was God's will, meeting and changing his, that made the difference? God's will was *first*. It was God's will that began the work, and made the sinner willing. *He never would have willed had not God made him willing*. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It is the power of Jehovah applied to us that makes us willing. Till that is applied, we are unwilling. It is his hand, operating directly upon the soul, that changes its nature and its bent. Were it not for that, our unwillingness would never be removed. No outward means or motives would be sufficient to effect the change;

for all these means and motives are rejected by the sinner; nor does he become willing even to allow the approach or application of these means and motives till God makes him willing. To speak of his being changed by that which he rejects is as absurd as to speak of a man's being healed by a medicine which he persists in refusing. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"

Are all, then, willing? Does not the depraved will remain in most, while the new will appears in few? What makes the difference? God's choice. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"* "Except the LORD OF HOSTS HAD LEFT unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."†

Does God then hinder sinners from believing and willing? No,—by no means. He hinders none. They are their own hindrance. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Not one soul would be saved if left to their own will. But, in his infinite mercy,

* Rom. ix. 21. † Isa. i. 9.

God does not leave them to their own wills. He puts forth his mighty power on some to make them willing. Were it not for this, all would be lost, for all would reject the Saviour.

But is not this unjust? Is God dealing fairly with his creatures in making some willing, and leaving the rest to their unwillingness? What! Are we to prohibit God from saving any, unless he saves all? Are we to accuse him of injustice, because he leaves some to reap the fruits of their unbelief, and delivers others from them? Is God unjust in saving whom he will, when all were lost?

Some are given to accusing us of making God guilty of partiality. As if they were singular in their zeal for God's honor, they exclaim, "We cannot bear a *partial* God!" Partiality means of course injustice; it means also, that the sinner has a *right* to favor from God. They must show, then, that for God to save some when all were lost is *unjust*. They must show that all sinners had a *right* to his favor, for if none had any right, there can be no partiality. But if this theory be true, then God was partial in not providing a Saviour for angels. He was partial in choosing Israel, and not choosing Babylon, or Egypt, as the nation to whom he made himself known. He was

partial in sending prophets to Israel, and not to Tyre and Sidon. He was partial in doing his mighty works only in the land of Judea. And Jesus was partial in commanding his disciples not to go to either Gentiles or Samaritans. In short, if *sovereignty* be partiality, then the Bible is full of it. And it would be just as well for these men to say at once what their theory implies,—that God is not at liberty to act as he pleases, but only as man may dictate!

But why does God save some, and not all? Because such is "the good pleasure of his will." He has infinitely wise reasons for this, though we understand them not. Might we not with equal propriety ask, Why did he keep some angels from falling? and why did he allow others to fall? Or, may we not ask, Why did he not think of saving angels, why think of men alone? Is Jehovah not at liberty to do what he will with his own? Is he not at liberty to create as many worlds and as many beings as he pleases? And when these are ruined, is he not at liberty to redeem as many or as few as he pleases?

The real question in all this is just, "Are all men so depraved that they will not be saved unless God puts forth his almighty power?"

If so, then it is plain that God must put forth his power to save every one that is saved; and surely he is at liberty to choose whom he is to save. If indeed men are not totally depraved, then there is no need for the interposition of God's hand, either in choosing or in saving. But admit man's total ruin and depravity, and you must admit the direct forth-putting of the arm of Jehovah. And hence it is that many in our day are beginning to deny man's total depravity of nature. They are smoothing down the expressions referring to it in Scripture, and claiming for man as much remaining power and goodness as will enable him in part to save himself, and do without the interposition of the hand of God.

Oh, but it is said, we do not deny election. We merely maintain that God elected those who he foresaw would believe.* I answer,

* The following remarks of Calvin will show, that in his day none but "Papist theologians" held the doctrine, that God elects men because he foresees they will believe.

"The Papist theologians have a distinction current among themselves, that God does not elect men according to works which are in them, but that *he chooses those who he foresees will be believers.* And therein they contradict what we have already alleged from St. Paul, for he says that we are chosen and elected in him, 'that we might be holy and without blame.' Paul must needs have spoken otherwise, if God elected us having foreseen that we should be holy. But he has not used such language: he says, 'he hath elected us that we might be holy.' He infers, therefore, that the latter

this is a total denial of election; and it is either dishonesty or ignorance to call this by such a name. God elected those who he foresaw would believe! And who were they? None,—absolutely none. *He foresaw that none would believe, not one.* And because he foresaw this, he elected some to believe. Otherwise not one would ever have believed at all.

With regard to the foreseeing who would believe, I have some difficulties to state. According to the Arminian theory, I may believe to-day and disbelieve to-morrow, according to my own will. I may thus go on believing and disbelieving alternately till the day of my death. God then one day foresees that I will believe, and he decrees to save me. But the next day he foresees me not believing, and he decrees that I should perish. How in such a case is the matter to be finally settled? Is it according to the state in which God foresees the sinner will be just at the last moment of his life? Or when? Let our opponents solve this difficulty if they are able.

(faith) depends upon the former (election.) Those who think otherwise, know not what man and human nature is." Such is the testimony of Calvin against the Papist theologians of his day. Since that time many have joined the ranks of these theologians, and glory in their heresies.

Oh, but some profane objector says, "Does God make men to be damned ?"* Let me in few words answer the miserable atheism of such an objection ; and I do it not out of regard for the pride of the objector, but for the sake of those who may be perplexed by this poor catch of an argument which is so freely and flippantly bandied about,—an argument which befits a scoffer only,—an argument whose father is the father of lies. It is somewhat remarkable that this is precisely the argument of Socinians, Universalists, and Deists, against the doctrine of future punishments, and against the existence of such a place as hell. If you speak of hell or everlasting fire to such, the answer is, "Did God make men to damn them ?" And however abominable and unscriptural their notion is, it is at least consistent with their own theory. Making God to be all love and nothing else, they think it inconsistent with his love that he should allow such a place as hell in the universe. They be-

* Were it not that I have heard these words used, and know that the expression is a current one among a certain class, I would not have mentioned it. Its flippancy is revolting ; its downright blasphemy still more so. It is the devil's original suggestion translated into modern language, "Ye shall not surely die, *i. e.*, God would not make you to damn you." Thus men, in these last days, are "foaming out their own shame."

lieve in no hell, and ask scornfully, "Did God make men to damn them?"*

But let me answer the question, however profane it may be. God did *not* make men to damn them. He did *not* make the angels "who kept not their first estate," to damn them. He did *not* make Lucifer for the purpose of casting him out of heaven. He did *not* make Adam for the purpose of driving him out of Paradise. He did *not* make Judas for the purpose of sending him to his own place. God made man,—every man, and everything

* The resemblance between the arguments of the new divines and those of Deists, &c., is by no means so narrow or casual as some may be disposed to think. I believe that some of the former have already carried out their principles, and maintain that there is no hell but what man creates for himself; that there is no material fire kindled by God, and no material sufferings inflicted by God; that man's conscience is his only tormentor—his own hell; that as God does nothing *directly* to man in saving him, so he inflicts nothing directly upon him as a punishment, but leaves him to be his own avenger. This, of course, is the consistent termination of their theory,—the natural development of their central principle,—that God does not interfere *directly* with the soul of man. How far this opinion prevails, I do not know; but it was maintained by one of them to myself. It is some years since one of the most noted Congregational ministers in London made the following avowal: "I do not believe in material fire in hell . . . it is quite enough to have *this* fire, the natural effects of sin in a moral nature, &c." Rev. T. Binney, sermon in the *Penny Pulpit*, May 26, 1839. Another of that body has but a few months ago sent forth an octavo volume to prove that there is no such thing as everlasting punishments at all! *Christ our Life*, by Rev. E. White.

to GLORIFY Him. This every creature, man and angel, must do, either actively or passively, either willingly or unwillingly,—actively and willingly in heaven, or passively and unwillingly in hell. This is God's purpose; and it shall stand. God may have many other ends in creation; but this is the chief one, the ultimate one,—the one which is above all the rest, and to which all the rest are subordinate.

In this sense then plainly, God did not make men either to destroy or to save them. He made them for his own glory. If the question is asked, Did God make the devil and his angels only to damn them? I answer, He made them for his own glory. They are lost forever; but does that prove that he made them only to destroy them? He kept their companions from falling, and hence they are called the "elect angels,"—while he did not keep *them*. He *could* have kept them all by his power, yet he did not. But does this prove that he made them to destroy them? They fell, and were in a moment consigned to everlasting chains; he made no effort to save them—he sent no redemption to them. But does this prove that He made them only to destroy them? If ever such an accusation *could* be preferred against God, it must be in

the case of angels, to whom no salvation was sent. It cannot be said of *man*, to whom a Saviour has come.

No, but it is said, you believe in election; and it is this that makes us put the question. If there be no election, then God has not made man to destroy him. On this let me make one or two remarks.

1. This is absurd, unless it can be proved that election is *God's plan for hindering men from getting to heaven, and for forcing them against their will down to death.* But God hinders no man from being saved, neither does he compel any man to be lost, either by what he *decrees* or what he *does*. How then does election prove that he made men to destroy them?

2. Whatever is right for God to *do*, it is right for him to *decree*. If God's casting sinners into hell be not wrong or unjust, then his purposing to do so from all eternity cannot be wrong or unjust. So that you must either deny that there is a hell, or admit God's right to predetermine who are to dwell there forever. There is no middle way between Calvinism and Universalism.

3. If there be no election, then everything must be left to chance, or to man's own will.

Either God must settle everything great and small; or man must settle everything; or chance must settle everything. We are told, that for God to settle everything is an intolerable hardship, and is just "creating men in order to damn them." Now we maintain, that for God to settle everything is the only right, as well as the only blessed condition in which our world can be. But let us ask, what better would it make matters were God *not* to settle everything beforehand? This appears to us unspeakably worse. For an infinitely wise, holy, gracious Being to arrange everything according to his own wisdom, holiness, and grace, appears to us the very perfection of things. For him not to do so, but to leave all things either to chance, or to the will of foolish, unholy, wicked beings, seems to us the very height of cruelty and folly. How *cruel* to leave a multitude of sinful, foolish, blind, perverse creatures to do whatever they please; so that *by means of their wills* this world is moving on without a specific plan for its motions, or to a certain end in which all its disorder is to issue;—so that not one, not even God, can tell what is to be the result of all this confusion, and sin, and darkness, or whether it is ever to come to a

termination at all, for life or for death to man, for glory or for shame to God! Yet we are told, that unless we admit of this infinite cruelty and hardship, we are making God a tyrant, who has created men to damn them! Unless we admit of a universe without an eternal plan to which all its motions are subject and subservient, a world of blind tumult and unmitigated chaos; a world where the only directly moving or energizing power is a sinful will, or rather a multitude of erring struggling wills; a world regarding which nothing is fixed as to who shall be born, and who shall die, as to who shall get the gospel, and who shall not, who shall be saved, or who shall be lost, or whether any shall be saved or any lost; unless we admit all this, we are told that we are making man a mere piece of inert irresponsible clay, and God the mere oppressor, not the loving Father of the creatures which he has made!

With these remarks I leave this point; and in doing so I would merely call your attention to one or two passages of Scripture, which it would be well for those to ponder who put such a question as that to which I have been adverting. "The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day

of evil," Prov. xvi. 4. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts xiii. 48. "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth . . . what if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," Rom. ix. 17, 22.

Texts like these are not to be explained away or overlooked. They are part of God's holy word, just as much as "God is love." And if one class of texts is to be twisted or turned away from, why not another? Let us fearlessly look both in the face; and let us believe them both, whatever difficulty we may find in reconciling them. Our first duty is to *believe*, not to *reconcile*. There are many things which in this life we shall not be able to reconcile; but there is nothing in the Bible which we need to shrink from believing. Notwithstanding all that I have said regarding election, I believe most firmly that "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." I believe that "God so loved the WORLD that he gave his only begotten Son." I believe that God is in earnestness and honesty making

proposals of friendship to sinners, and beseeching all to be reconciled to him. I believe that the invitations of the Gospel are to ALL without exception. Yet, while I believe all this, I believe in election too. "Many are called, but few are chosen." If I am asked, How can you reconcile these things? I answer, I am not careful to reconcile them. I am satisfied that God has told me that *both* are true. Therefore I believe them *both*. The day is coming when he will make all things plain. "He that believeth doth not make haste." I would not fret myself, nor be impatient at the difficulty. He will solve it in his own time and way. Who am I that I should say to God, "I cannot believe both of these doctrines, for, to my mind, they are inconsistent with each other." Is my inability to comprehend their consistency a reason for my rejecting either the one or the other? In that case the infidel alone is consistent, for he rejects both.—I am yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you."—Deut. vii. 7.

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord, yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau."—Mal. i. 2.

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."—Matt. xi. 25.

"It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."—Matt. xiii. 11.

"To sit on my right hand, or on my left, is not mine to give, save to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."—Matt. xx. 23.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. xxii. 14.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."—John xv. 16.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."—Eph. i. 4.

"When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me."—Gal. i. 15.

"All that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world."—Rev. xvii. 8.

NOTES.

Election means *choice*, and to elect means to *choose*. The sovereign right of choosing belongs to God alone. Hence He said himself to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." (Rom. ix. 15.) His will is the law of the universe. We are the clay and he is the potter. (Is. lxiv. 8.) All things take place according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (Acts ii. 23.) He has made his choice or election from all eternity. (Eph. i. 4.) Everything in this world happens according to God's eternal arrangements. Nothing takes place except what God causes to be, or *permits to be;*—and whatever happens in time, is decreed from eternity. (Is. xlvi. 10.) Even the wicked deed of those who crucified the Lord of glory is said by the Apostle to be determined before by the hand and counsel of God. (Acts iv. 27, 28; also ii. 23.)

All that God does, he arranges beforehand in his eternal counsels with infinite wisdom. He does not leave anything

to chance, or to the direction of beings less perfect in wisdom than himself. If he were to do so, everything would go wrong. And what he intends to do is not left undetermined till the moment, or the day, or the year, before doing it, for then he would be a changeable being like man; but it is settled from all eternity. Hence it is said, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Acts xv. 18. Thus God decreed from all eternity to make the world, and when his appointed time came, he made it. So God decreed from all eternity to create man, and when the fixed time came, he was created. It was not Adam who chose to be made; but it was God who chose to make Adam.

Now, what is true of the *making* of man, is far more true of the *saving* of man. Adam was made, not because he chose to be made, but because God chose to make him; and Adam was saved, not because he chose to be saved, but because God chose to save him. Adam's salvation depended wholly upon God's having *chosen* him to salvation, that is, upon God's having *elected* him. Had God not chosen him, he never would have chosen God, and so would never have been saved. So it was with Cain and Abel. Both were equally lost by nature, yet Abel was saved, and Cain was not. Why was Abel saved? It was not because he chose God any more than his brother Cain, but because God chose him. Therefore it is written, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (Rom. ix. 18.) What is true of Abel is true of all that ever have been, or ever shall be saved.

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! (Rom. ix. 14.) God cannot be unrighteous in saving whom He pleases, or in passing by whom He pleases. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Rom. ix. 21.) Shall worms of the dust say, What doest thou? His decreeing to save *man*, did not make it unjust or cruel to pass by the *angels*. It could not be so unless they had *deserved* to be saved, which they did not. He decreed to save *none* of the angels, but he decreed to save *some* from among men. He needed not have saved any. He might have left them all to perish just as he left the angels. But he determined to save *some*. He did not determine to save all, or all would have been saved, just as all the angels were kept from falling whom he decreed to

keep. It would have been infinite love to have saved one single soul; but it was far greater love to save so many. And then how wonderfully was this love shown forth in determining to do so from all eternity! O what unfathomable love is displayed in God's eternal decree of electing love! To be thinking of us from all eternity! To leave nothing to chance, but to fix everything beforehand! To leave nothing to our own wretched choice, but to arrange everything from all eternity according to his own glorious choice, his infinitely perfect and unerring plans! Oh, what a universe is this, where nothing, not even the falling of a sparrow, is left to anything short of infinitely perfect wisdom, infinitely pure and perfect love! Oh, if there were no eternal and unchangeable decree of the God only wise, ordering everything aright, what a mass of unutterable confusion would this world be! How unutterably consoling to think that everything that occurs is ordered by the eternal will and wisdom of the blessed God!

By nature man chooses nothing but sin. No man would choose God, or ever think of God, if God did not first choose him. If men, then, were left to their own choice, all would be lost. If there were no decree of God, no man could be saved. What an awful doctrine is that of those who say there is no eternal decree! To take away God's *electing* grace, is to take away a poor sinner's only hope of salvation. It must be plain then to all, that God's decree does not *hinder* any man from being saved. Those that are lost, are lost not because God wanted them to perish, but because they would not be saved. *They would have been lost even had there been no decree, because they were sinners.* God's decree did not *make* them sinners; it did not *force* them to be lost. It *found* them sinners, and it left them so; it *found* them lost, and it left them so. It did nothing more. It did not compel them to sin; it did not drive them to ruin. No. It simply passed them by. And was the sovereign God not entitled to do this?

Man could not *create* himself, and far less can he *save* himself. When God made him, he brought him out of nothing; when God saves him, he brings him out of a state far lower and worse than nothing. If in the one case, then, everything depended upon God's will and decree, much more in the other. There can be no injustice here. Had God pleased, He might have saved the whole world. But He did not; and thousands are now in hell, and shall be to all

eternity. Who will say that God is unjust, because He has left them to perish forever, while he has saved others as vile as they? If there be any cruelty at all in the matter, it must be in his allowing any to perish when he might have saved all. The opposers of election say, there cannot be such a thing as a decree fixing everything, or God would not be sincere in saying that he willeth all men to be saved. But they might far more plausibly argue, that God cannot be almighty, for he says he *wills* all to be saved, and yet does not save all.

If there be any injustice in the case, it must be, not in *decreeing* the thing, but in *doing* it. And yet the thing is done! Whether decreed or not, the thing is done! To remove the decree will not extinguish the flames of wrath. Hell is peopled already with millions of immortal souls, doomed to fiery wrath; while heaven is filled with millions of ransomed sinners, as vile, yea, perhaps viler far than they! What has made the difference? Man's will or God's?—man's choice or God's? Those that deny God's electing love may say, "Man's will;" but they who own a sovereign God, will say at once, "God's will, not man's." Yes! God's *eternal* will; for Jehovah changes not, but his plans and purposes are, like himself, from everlasting. "Who hath made us to differ?" is the wondering exclamation of earth. "Who hath made us to differ?" is the rapturous song of heaven!

Even Mr. Thomas Erskine, in his work on Universal Pardon, is very decided upon the point of God's *will* entering into everything, great and small, that takes place on the earth. He speaks on this wise. "The laws of nature are the continual actings of God. There is no power in the universe but his, and where his power is, there is he. He made the clay, and sustains it with all its qualities, and in whatever form it may be; and the cessation of his *will* that it should exist, would be the cessation of its existence. The uninterrupted actings of that will are the laws of nature, and in every one of these actings is the entire Godhead. The course of nature, the elements, the order of events, the existence and movements of all matter, are the direct actings of God. And are not the existence and movement of mind, too, his actings? Surely it is so, and it must be so; but yet I feel that my will works contrary to his! *My will*

is the sustained creature of *his will* from moment to moment, incapable of a single act without power communicated from him, and yet I am conscious that it works contrary to him, and is morally responsible for so doing. This is too wonderful for me. I cannot attain unto it. With what feelings ought I to regard him to whose infinite mind my individual existence, with every particular of my history, through the future eternity, has been from all eternity a distinct and familiar idea . . . . I am sure that I have never formed a thought, nor uttered a word, nor done a deed, to which he has not been most intimately present, and in which he has not been himself the acting power, enabling me to speak, and think, and do. And here is a great marvel. I am conscious that these thoughts, and words, and deeds, have been full of sin, yet my conscience acquits him, and lays the undivided blame upon myself."—*On the Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel*, pp. 81–83. Another writer of the same school, Mr. Scott of Woolwich, brings out the same truth with considerable power and beauty. I can only quote a sentence, "Whatever is done, even when that is committed which is in extremest contrariety to the will of God, still, but by the power of God, it could not be done. When the murderer conceives malignity in his breast, He in whom he is living, and moving, and having his being, is at that instant sustaining the capacities of affection, so turned to evil . . . . the very will of the murderer himself is also more than a gift once given by God; by God it is at the moment given, for by the act of God alone could it also continue to subsist. Is anything in the whole process the murderer's own? That is his own exclusively in which the moral character—the *evil* of the act resides. God enables him to think, but it is himself that thinks; God sustains his faculty of will, his electing power; but it is himself that *wills*, that chooses evil."—*Three Discourses*, p. 24.

LETTER V.

PREDESTINATION AND FOREKNOWLEDGE.

"Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—Eph. i. 11.

My dear Friend,

It is of some importance that we should settle the real nature of these two things, predestination and foreknowledge, and ascertain which of the two is first. The question is, does God fix a thing, simply because he foreknows it, or does he foreknow it because he has fixed it? There are vague ideas in men's minds on those points, and it is well to know the truth with distinctness.

I answer then unhesitatingly, that predestination must be the foundation of foreknowledge. God foreknows everything that takes place, because he has fixed it. In proof of this I remark,

1. *The opposite of this is an impossibility.* To fix a thing is to make that thing certain to come to pass, which, but for that fixing, would not have come to pass. If then there be any

kind of foreknowledge before predestination, it is simply the foreknowledge that the thing which he desires would not come to pass, unless he sees fit to fix it.* God knew all that

* "For the decree of predestination, in as far as the order of intention is concerned, no foreknowledge is required or ought to be presupposed beyond *the simple intelligence of all things which are possible*, seeing this decree depends on no cause, reason, or condition, but purely on the will of him who decrees."—*Ames. Medulla Theologiæ*, p. 106. I add also the following passage from *Barnes' Notes on the Epistles.* It is a comment on Eph. i. 5. "The word used (προορίζω) means properly *to set bounds before;* and then to *pre-determine.* There is the essential idea of setting bounds or limits, and of doing this beforehand. It is not that God determined to do it when it was actually done, but that he intended to do it beforehand. No language could express this more clearly, and I suppose this interpretation is generally admitted. Even by those who deny the doctrine of particular election, it is not denied that the word here used means to *pre-determine;* and they maintain that the sense is, that God had pre-determined to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people. Admitting then that the meaning is, to predestinate in the proper sense, the only question is, *who* are predestinated? To whom does the expression apply? Is it to nations, or to individuals? In reply to this, in addition to the remarks already made, I would observe, (1.) That there is no specification of *nations* here as such, no mention of the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews. (2.) Those referred to were those included in the word '*us*,' among whom Paul was one—but Paul was not a heathen. (3.) The same objection will lie against the doctrine of predestinating *nations* which will lie against predestinating *individuals.* (4.) Nations are made up of individuals, and the pre-determination must have had some reference to individuals. What is a nation but a collection of individuals? There is no such abstract being or thing as a nation; and if there was any purpose in regard to a nation, it must have had some reference to the individuals composing it. He that would act on the ocean, must act on the drops of water that make up the ocean; for besides the collection of

might *possibly* have come to pass had he let the world alone to act out its iniquity. In all

drops of water there is no ocean. He that would remove a mountain, must act on the particles of matter that compose that mountain; for there is no such thing as an abstract mountain. Perhaps there was never a greater illusion than to suppose that all difficulty is removed in regard to the doctrine of election and predestination, by saying that it refers to *nations*. What difficulty is lessened? What is gained by it? How does it make God appear more amiable and good? Does it render him less *partial*, to suppose that he has made a difference among nations, than to suppose he has made a difference among individuals? Does it remove any difficulty about the offer of salvation, to suppose that he has granted the knowledge of his truth to some *nations*, and withheld it from others? The truth is, that all the reasoning which has been founded on this supposition, has been merely throwing dust in the eyes. If there is *any* well-founded objection to the doctrine of decrees or predestination, it is to the doctrine *at all*, alike in regard to nations and individuals, and there are just the same difficulties in the one case as in the other. But there is no real difficulty in either. Who could worship or honor a God who had no plan, or purpose, or intention in what he did? Who can believe that the universe was formed and is governed without design? Who can doubt that what God *does* he always meant to do? When, therefore, he converts and saves a soul, it is clear that he always intended to do it. He has no new plan. It is not an after-thought. It is not the work of chance. If I can find out anything that God has *done*, I have the most certain conviction that he *always meant* to do it—and this is all that is intended by the doctrine of election or predestination. What God does, he always meant to do. What he permits, he always meant to permit. I may add further, that if it is right to *do* it, it was right to *intend* to do it. If there is no injustice or partiality in the act itself, there is no injustice or partiality in the intention to perform it. If it is right to save a soul, it was always right to intend to save it. If it is right to condemn a sinner to woe, it was right to intend to do it. Let us then look *at the thing itself*, and if that is not wrong, we should not blame the purpose to do it, however long it has been cherished." Pp. 22–24.

that infinity of possibles, he saw that the thing he wanted was not to be found. Seeing the end from the beginning, he saw that the thing he desired would never come to pass unless brought into being by a direct act of his own will. No other will would desire or could effect that which he saw to be best, either in regard to persons or events. The thing he wanted was not to be found among the *possibles*, but among the *impossibles*, if matters were left to themselves, and to the operation of the usual laws. How then shall that which is impossible be rendered not only possible but certain? Evidently by the direct interference of God. God having thus interfered and *arranged* everything according to his wisdom, of necessity must *know* them as to come to pass. In other words, he foreknows everything, because he has arranged everything. Everything is certain in his foreknowledge, because everything is certain in his arrangements.

Take the case of a saved sinner, such as Saul of Tarsus. In looking forward from eternity, God saw that sinner. He saw him in his guilt and sin. He saw him hastening away from himself. He saw that if left to himself, or to the usual laws of things, he would only go deeper into sin, and farther from him-

self. He saw that in such a case his salvation was impossible,—that he never would believe, and never repent, and never turn. This was all that mere foreknowledge could tell. Foreknowledge alone can say nothing as to salvation. But here predestination comes in. God forms a design to bring that man to glory; he is a "chosen vessel." And having this design regarding him, he resolves to put forth his power, he pre-arranges all his plans concerning him, he fixes the day and hour of his conversion, and thus he *foreknows* its certainty, because he has *fore-arranged* it. Otherwise it could not have been known; nay, it would have been an impossibility.

2. *The opposite of this is an absurdity.* What can be more absurd than to *fix* a thing which I already know will come to pass, whether I fix it or not? This is truly imputing foolishness to God. It represents him as giving forth a solemn decree, to fix a thing which is already certain. As if the queen of this realm were giving forth a statute, decreeing that the sun should rise to-morrow, because she knew that such would be the case from the laws of nature. Is not this a mockery of God? It makes him thus to speak,—"I foreordain that such a sinner shall be saved, because I

foresee that he will be saved." Unless, then, we impute folly to God, and affirm that there is no meaning in the word predestination, we must admit that God must foreordain before he foreknows, and that he knows everything, just because he has fore-arranged everything according to his own infinite wisdom and grace.

These are two arguments which appear to me quite conclusive. But let us turn to Scripture. I need not again direct your attention to the passages already quoted in the previous letters I shall rather notice one or two on which I have not yet dwelt. Acts ii. 23, "Him being delivered by the DETERMINATE COUNSEL and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts iv. 27, "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together for to do whatsoever THY HAND AND THY COUNSEL DETERMINED BEFORE to be done."

On these passages I would offer a few remarks,—

1. The language is very explicit and plain. It is the strongest that could possibly have been used to denote fore-ordination. There is nothing about it ambiguous or hard to be un-

derstood. To take it in any other sense would be absurd. The doctrine may be inscrutable, but the words are plain. And is the nature of the doctrine a reason for our refusing to take the words of God in their natural and simple sense?

2. Admitting *our* views of fore-ordination to be true, could they have been expressed in language different from this, or from that employed in the Epistle to the Romans and Ephesians? Had we been left to choose out words for setting forth our views, we could not have desired any other than these. Can our opponents say the same? Are these words the most natural and appropriate for expressing *their* views?

3. This determinate counsel is said positively to have fixed certain events in Christ's history. Now, if some were fixed, we have reason to conclude that all others also were. Yet in the life and death of Christ we see nothing, but what seemed outwardly to occur in the natural order of events. It will certainly be conceded that the will of the Son of God was *free* from first to last. Yet we learn that what he *voluntarily* did and suffered was also pre-determined by God. In his case there was entire free-will, yet entire pre-ordination.

What then becomes of the objection to predestination, arising from its supposed interference with the free-will of moral agents? In Christ's life and death we have a series of pre-ordained events, and at the same time a series of free actions. And this is a sufficient answer to the current objection. We may not be able to reconcile these things, yet there they stand palpably before us.

4. This determinate counsel is said to have delivered up Christ into the hands of men. Pilate and Herod, &c., are said to have done what God's hand and counsel had pre-determined. Here is something still more striking. The deeds of these wicked men are said to have come to pass according to this counsel, yet these deeds are not the less wicked, and those men are not the less responsible. Here, again, we have another objection answered, or at least silenced. To reconcile these things may be difficult, yet the statement in this passage is plain. What pride and folly then are there in the questions and cavils which we so often hear in connection with this doctrine. "If God has arranged everything, man's will is not free. How can the sinner be responsible? How can he be plied with motives and arguments? Of what use is it to do anything

towards an end, if all be arranged beforehand by another. How unjust is it in God to warn and invite sinners, when he has fixed everything already." All these cavils have their answer in the passages quoted above. It is vain to think of putting questions such as these, till those strong and explicit declarations have been explained away or denied. They teach us plainly that our world's history, in all things great and small, is a history of events pre-ordained by God from eternity, yet at the same time coming to pass by the free agency of man. This pre-ordination is the effect and the expression of God's will, yet it does not in the least interfere with man's responsibility; nor does it suppose any violence done to the will of man.

It was *certain* that the ten tribes were to revolt, for it was predicted long before; but did that make their revolt less voluntary? It was *certain* that Israel was to apostatize, and to be carried captive to Babylon, but did that make their apostasy less voluntary or less sinful, or Nebuchadnezzar's act of carrying them captive less free? It was *certain* that Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, but did that make the coming of his parents to that town less voluntary? It was certain that Judas

was to betray Christ, for it had been predicted by David in the Psalms long before, but did that lessen the sin of Judas, or make his act less free? In the same way I might go over every prophecy in Scripture, and ask the same question. And I wonder greatly what the answer of our opponents would be. How can *they* reconcile with *their* ideas of free agency the fact that the sin of Judas was predicted by the Holy Spirit, as certain, one thousand years before it came to pass? Was Judas a mere machine, or was God the author of his sin?

But it will be said, Are we not told that this election or predestination is according to foreknowledge? (1 Pet. i. 2; Rom. viii. 29.) In reference to the first two of these passages, I would remark that the word "foreknowledge," in the second verse, in the original is the same as that rendered "fore-ordained" in the twentieth. Now, in the latter of these (20th,) there can be no doubt that it means pre-ordination, for it refers to Christ as the appointed Lamb; and if so, then it is impossible to suppose that the word foreknowledge, in the 2d, refers simply to foreseeing, and nothing more. Or there is another view that may be taken of it. I quote from a tract which I wrote some time

ago. "There are some who deny this choosing. They are so zealous for man's free-will, that they will not admit of free-will in God. All the choosing they will allow God to exercise is the choosing of those who he foreknows will turn to him—*i. e.*, choosing those who first choose him. They quote in defence, 1 Pet. i. 2, 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father;' and they ask, Is not this choosing according to foreknowledge? Yes, beyond all doubt it is. But of what is the *foreknowledge?* Is it of the evil or the good? Certainly of the *evil;* for what else was there to foreknow? God, foreknowing all the circumstances of the case—the evil of the whole race of Adam—that there was nothing but evil about any, no desire even to turn or believe, nothing but absolute corruption, enmity, helplessness, and death,—God foreseeing all this, chose some out of this mass of wickedness. And thus they are 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God.'"*

But then we are asked to look at Rom. viii. 29, "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Now, to this the very same answers

* *Kelso Tracts*, No. 32, p. 2.

might be made as in reference to the preceding. But in addition to these let me remark, that the word "foreknow," means not simply to know beforehand, but to "fix the choice upon."* The meaning of the passage is then evidently,—whom God set his choice upon, them he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. These saints were the objects of his eternal choice, and being so, they were appointed by him to the honor of being made in the image of his own Son.

But on this I shall not dwell farther. I wish to notice some concessions of our adversaries which appear to me to overthrow their whole system. They admit that in certain things there is a real election. They admit, for instance, that there was a real election of the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, and a real election of David to the throne. They admit also, that there is a real election of particular nations to particular privileges and favors.†

* The German critics, Schleusner and Kuttner, though Neologian and Arminian, give this as the undoubted meaning of the passage.

† See among others, a book published or republished at Glasgow about two years ago, entitled, "The Doctrines of the Atonement and Election Considered." P. 42, &c. Indeed this is not only the *admission* but the *doctrine* of almost all Arminian writers. Not that they like an election of nations any better than an election of individuals, but it seems to them the only way to the solution of difficulties, which are otherwise insoluble.

This admission is fatal to their theory. Their main prop was, that the election of individuals was just another word for favoritism and injustice. Now, if the election of persons be unjust, that of nations must be more unjust. If the one be inconsistent with man's responsibility, so must be the other. If the election of persons show an undue partiality, much more must the election of nations. For God to reveal himself to the Jews, and not to the Egyptians, is as much favoritism as for him to convert one soul, and not to convert another. He did far more for Israel than he did for other nations. He brought them near him. He gave them his word. He taught them the way of forgiveness through the blood of the sacrifice. He placed them in circumstances of peculiar advantage. He did not do this to Babylon or Nineveh, to Assyria or Egypt. Can it be wrong then to choose individuals, and right to choose nations? Can it be wrong *not* to choose an individual to salvation, and yet right not to choose a nation to those privileges through which alone salvation comes? Can it be right to pass by some nations, and yet wrong to pass by individuals? Nations are composed of individuals, and to choose a nation, is *to give the individuals in that na-*

tion a peculiar advantage which is denied to others, an advantage which issues in the eternal life of thousands. And hence, if there be any injustice in the matter, there is more injustice in a national election than in a personal one. It will be said, God knew what nations would reject his message, and therefore he did not send it to them. On this I offer the following remarks.

1. A nation being composed of individuals, our opponents must maintain that God foresaw that *every soul* in these would reject the truth. If not, would it not be hard, upon their theory, for God to withhold the gospel from the whole nations, if he knew that *some* in these nations would have believed and been saved?

2. If these nations are denied the gospel, because God foreknew they would reject it, then they are condemned for a thing which they never did, but which God merely foresaw they would do. Whole nations are treated as criminals, rejecters of the gospel, when the opportunity was never given them either to receive or reject it. I am not aware of anything in Calvinism so hard or unjust as this. We teach that God punishes men and nations on account of what they *actually do*, not on account of what he foresees they would

do if he allowed them the means. This theory, on the other hand, teaches that whole nations are condemned to that most fearful of all curses, a deprivation of the gospel, not on account of their actual sins, but because certain things were foreseen which they would have done! Now, if God can justly condemn nations on account of sin *not committed*, but merely foreseen as likely to be committed, why may he not condemn sinners to eternal death for sins never committed, but only foreseen? Would this be just? Strange that men should maintain the justice of depriving nations of the gospel for sins which they never committed, yet affirm the injustice of God choosing a soul to everlasting life according to his sovereign will. But this is just one of the paradoxes of Arminianism. God chooses some to life, it is said, because he foresees they will believe, and he does not choose others to life because he foresees they will not believe. So that it is not faith that saves us, but God's foresight of our faith; nor is it actually unbelief that ruins us, but God's foresight of our unbelief.

3. God speaks of sending his messages to some who would reject, and of not sending it to others who were more likely to have re-

ceived it. Ezek. iii. 5, 6. "Son of man, go get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel: not to many people of a strange speech, and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. *Surely had I sent thee to them they would have hearkened unto thee.*" This surely settles the matter. It is not a nation's foreseen willingness to hear that leads God to send them his messengers, nor a nation's foreseen unwillingness that prevents him sending these. It is all according to his own sovereign will and purpose.

It is affirmed that there is a work *equally* in the hearts of all men alike; that God has done, and is doing, the very utmost that can be done for every individual of our race; and that to maintain anything else is to charge God with partiality and injustice, as well as to deny the responsibility of man.

The proof adduced in support of these statements is a passage in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it? But it is remarkable, that this is one of the strongest proofs that God did a great deal more for Israel

than he did for any other nation. He allowed the whole world to remain a wilderness, but he made them his vineyard. He fenced this vineyard, he gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine. "He dealt not so with any other nation."* Was this partiality or injustice? Or was this doing the same thing for all?

Besides, it is evident that this passage is perverted. It does not mean that God at that time had done all he could do for Israel. For he went on to do much more for them. Not only did he not cease to bless them, and to strive with them, but he multiplied his blessings, and increased his strivings with them, long after he had uttered the words referred to. So that the passage cannot mean that he had done *all* he could; for he proceeded to do a great deal more, raising up prophet after prophet, giving them line upon line. Nay, many of the most gracious words that Israel ever heard were spoken after this time. If,

* Ps. cxlvii. 20. God's peculiar love and favor to Israel above all other nations is frequently celebrated in the Psalms and in the prophets. And what is the whole book of Deuteronomy but an illustration of this? In the case of Israel we see something of what God's "utmost" was. Did all the nations of the earth experience this same "utmost" also in his dealings with them? If not, why are we told that God has done the utmost he could for the whole world?

then, the verse does not really mean that God had actually done his utmost, the inference which is founded upon it falls to pieces.

It is plain, then, that God does more for some nations than for others. He did more for Israel than he did for Egypt or Babylon. He did more for Israel at one time than at another, for one generation than for another,—nay, for one district of Judea than for another,—nay, for one individual than for another. What else is the meaning of the words of Jesus?* "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the death of Elias; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian."

It is not true, then, that God does no more for one nation than another, or for one individual than another. The opposite of this is, and has always been, the *fact*—a fact frequently referred to in Scripture, as a proof of God's right to do according to his will in the armies

* Luke iv. 25. Will any of the deniers of God's sovereignty furnish a solution of this passage in accordance with their views? On their principles, what can the Lord mean?

of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No reasonings of men can alter the fact; nor can any ingenuity deprive that fact of its deep and solemn meaning.

I may perhaps be told that the cause of this inequality is in the church of Christ, which has not done its duty. Had Christians, it is said, acted aright, the world would have been converted long ere now. As this is a common way of attempting to solve the difficulty, it may be well to answer it fully.

1. Who told them that the cause is wholly in the church? Who told them that the world would have been converted before this, had Christians been what they professed? Give me one single passage of Scripture that states this. Surely it is a bold and hazardous assertion to make, without one verse of Scripture to support it.

2. It is not true. What! Is such a mighty and majestic event as the salvation of the world to be dependent upon a creature's will? Is it to depend upon *man* whether the world is to be converted or not? Has God no purpose to be carried out? Has he nothing at all to say in the matter? Is he to stand by looking on, wondering whether it may please his

people to put forth their energies and convert the world?

3. It is unscriptural. There are passages of Scripture which explicitly contradict it. What, for instance, does God mean, when, speaking of Corinth, and giving a reason why he enjoined Paul to remain and labor there, he said, "I have much people in this city?" Again, what is meant by that similar passage, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed?" Again, what did our Lord mean, when, as if explaining the reason why so many rejected him, he said, "Many are called, but few are chosen?" Or what did he mean when he said, "This gospel of the kingdom must be preached among all nations FOR A WITNESS, and then shall the end come?" And, lastly, what did the Holy Spirit mean, first, by forbidding the apostles to preach the word in Asia, and then by prohibiting Paul from passing over and preaching the Gospel in Bithynia? (Acts xvi. 6, 7.)

4. It is profane. It is saying that the wickedness of the world cannot be remedied by God, but only by the church; that God has no power to convert the world; that it is the church which has all the power; and that unless she pleases to put forth her might and zeal, God

can do nothing for the world. Poor world! This is sad news indeed! Thy destiny hangs upon the power and love of thy fellow-sinners! The strength and love of thy God are nothing, and can do nothing for thee! Miserable comfort, and miserable comforters, indeed! Yet these are the men who speak so much of the love of God, and accuse others of hiding or denying it!

Yet I am far from saying that Christians are not much to blame. How little do the most zealous amongst us do for souls! How much more might we do by prayer, by labor, and by holy living! Still I deny that the inactivity or unbelief of saints will account for the darkness that overspreads the nations. Failure in duty on the part of the people of God may account for many things, but not for all.

Did the prophets of old fail in their duty, and was their failure the reason why so few in Israel believed the report, or the reason why Nineveh, or Tyre, or Sidon, were not converted? Was it their fault that they were not sent to these cities, and received no message to them? Why were there so many prophets raised up within that small territory, and not one commissioned to bear tidings to a

dark and dying world? Could none be spared? Could no more be raised up? Did they refuse to go? Had God no message of grace to give them for the dark millions of Europe in the west, or Asia in the east, or Ethiopia in the south?

Did the Son of God fail in his duty, in that he did not preach the Gospel save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Why did he make this distinction? Why did he never travel beyond the narrow Judean circle? Why did he command his disciples at first to make the same difference, prohibiting them from preaching the gospel in any city, either of Gentiles or Samaritans? Might not the Samaritans have said, you tell us that the utmost has been done for us that can be done, and that all are equally dealt with? Why then are we passed by? and why are the messengers of peace prohibited from entering our territory? What answer could be given, save that such was the will and purpose of the God only wise?

Did the apostles afterwards fail in their duty, when, after Pentecost, they went abroad to proclaim the everlasting gospel? Was their failure the reason why the world was not then converted? Are we not plainly taught that

such was not the case? Why was it, for instance, that when Paul wished to go to Bithynia to preach the gospel there, the Spirit suffered him not? Was this doing the utmost for Bithynia that God could do? Nay, it was not even doing the utmost that Paul could have done, and wanted to do.

If the Spirit work equally in all, then it is plain that the reason why he succeeds in some and fails in others, must be either the one or the other of the following:—

1. It might be because some have naturally better hearts than others, more inclined towards what is good, made of less rebellious, and more *believing materials.* This better class of sinners, less stout-hearted than others, yield and obey, and so are saved! The rest, being more stubborn and ungodly, hold out and are lost! What hope does this give to the chief of sinners? Where in all this is there the plucking of brands from the burning?

2. Because the Spirit has attempted a work beyond his power. He fails in his efforts. The sinner has overpowered him, and proved stronger than he. The sinner is able to overcome the Spirit; but the Spirit is not able to overcome the sinner. The Spirit has done his utmost, and failed!

But, finally, to say that the Spirit is doing all he can possibly do for the sinner, is either a mere quibble, a play upon words, or else it is most melancholy profanity. If it mean that literally and truly OMNIPOTENCE has been tasked to its utmost, and failed in the attempt to convert a sinner, it is profanity; for it is saying that the creature is mightier than the Creator, and able to withstand, nay, to overcome, Omnipotence. If, however, this is not what is meant, then what else can be the meaning, but that God is doing *all that he sees fit to do* for each individual? He is putting forth in each the utmost degree of power that his infinite wisdom sees fit. And if this be all that is intended, then there is no dispute between us. We are at one. For what is this but merely another way of stating Jehovah's absolute and all-wise sovereignty in giving or withholding his blessings?

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for the

same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endure with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"—Rom. ix. 16–24.

Let me conclude this letter, by calling your attention to the following narrative. If I am not mistaken, the conversation related took place more than half a century ago. It is, however, very suitable as an illustration of some of the points discussed in the preceding

pages. The chief speaker was a minister of an Independent congregation. Being once on a journey, he was overtaken by a stranger who urged some objections to predestination, and among others, that it made God unjust. "Before that can be admitted," said the minister, "you must prove that God owes eternal life to any of his fallen creatures; and further, that the vindication of a mortal is essential to the equity of a God. Besides, the question is not, What are the difficulties connected with the doctrine, or can a worm solve them all? but, Is this doctrine of predestination scripturally and philosophically true, or is it not? The difficulties of the subject will prove nothing against the fact; and he that brings the legislation of his Creator before the tribunal of his own understanding, should first be able to measure the length of his eternity, the breadth of his immensity, the height of his wisdom, and the depth of his decrees. Is it not a sad evidence of human depravity, that creatures of a day will sit in judgment on spiritual and eternal things, as if the Author of the great mystery of godliness were altogether such an one as themselves!"

"I hope you will not be offended," replied the gentleman, "if I declare, notwithstanding

all you advance, I do *not*, I *cannot* believe in this doctrine of predestination."

"And I hope," rejoined Mr. C., "that you will not be offended if I declare, I am quite of opinion you *do believe* in it."

"I beg, Sir," said the other, "you will explain yourself."

"If you will favor me with the short answer of Yes or No, to a few explicit questions I shall take the liberty to propose," replied Mr. C., "I have little doubt but I can prove what I have affirmed."

"It will afford me great satisfaction," said the other, "to comply with your proposal."

Mr. C. then began, "Are you of opinion that all sinners will be saved?"

"By no means," said the gentleman.

"But you have no doubt," added Mr. C., "it will be formally and finally determined, at the day of judgment, who are to be saved, and who are to perish?"

"I am certainly of that opinion," replied the stranger.

"I would ask, then," continued Mr. C., "is the great God under any necessity of waiting till these last awful assizes, in order to determine who are the righteous that are to be saved, and the wicked who are to perish?"

"By no means," said the other; "for he certainly knows already."

"When do you imagine," asked Mr. C., "that he first attained this knowledge?"

Here the gentleman paused, and hesitated a little; but soon answered, "He must have known from all eternity."

"Then," said Mr. C., "it must have been fixed from all eternity."

"That by no means follows," replied the other.

"Then it follows," added Mr. C., "that he did not *know* from all eternity, but only *guessed*, and happened to guess right: for how can Omniscience *know* what is yet uncertain?"

Here the stranger began to perceive his difficulty, and after a short debate, confessed, it should seem, it must have been fixed from eternity.

"Now," said Mr. C., "one question more will prove that you believe in predestination as well as I. You have acknowledged, what can never be disproved, that God could not know from eternity who shall be saved, unless it had been fixed from eternity. If then it was fixed, be pleased, Sir, to inform me who fixed it?"

The gentleman candidly acknowledged he

had never taken this view of the subject before, and said he believed it would be the last time he should attempt to oppose predestination to eternal life.

With this illustration I leave this subject, which I have handled at some length, both because I believe it to be important in itself, and because right views of it lie at the foundation of the Gospel, and of salvation by free grace. If there be no predestination, there can be no "names written in the book of life from the foundation of the world;" and if so, then who can be saved?

I am, yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."—Exod. ix. 16.

"Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass."—Job xiv. 5.

"Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."—Jer. i. 5.

"And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."—Acts xvii. 26.

"Of him, and through him, and to him are all things."—Rom. xi. 36.

"The called according to his purpose."—Rom. viii. 28.

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."—Eph. i. 5.

"Being predestinated according to the purpose of him

who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—Eph. i. 11.

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Eph. iii. 1.

"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thess. v. 9.

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."—2 Thess. ii. 13.

NOTE.

No expression can be stronger than that of Acts xiii. 48: "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." How then do our opponents get rid of it? By saying that it means, "*as many* as were *disposed* for eternal life, believed!" Any one who knows the Greek language, or can consult a lexicon, will have no difficulty in seeing that such cannot be the meaning of the passage. I know of no commentator who gives any sanction to such an utter perversion of words. If it does not mean "ordained or appointed," it can only mean "commanded," for these are its two meanings in the New Testament, as any reader may see, by consulting the following passages:—Matt. xxviii. 16; Luke vii. 8; Acts xv. 2, xxii. 10, xxviii. 33. In these passages it is the simple verb τασσω that occurs. Its compound διατασσω has just the same meaning. See Matt. xi. 1; Luke iii. 31, viii. 55, xvii. 9, 10; Acts vii. 44. The only passages which can have the slightest bearing upon the proposed perversion of the passage is 1 Cor. xvi. 15: "They have *addicted* themselves," &c. But this is the *active voice* of the verb, and its meaning is determined by the pronoun *themselves*, which it governs. Whereas in Acts xiii. 48 the verb is in the passive voice, and must refer not to their doing something for themselves, but to something done for them by another. To fix myself, and to be fixed by another, are very different things.

LETTER VI.

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

"The Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx. 28.

My dear Friend,

I do not intend to enter fully upon the subject of Christ's work. This would require a much fuller discussion than I am able at present to bestow upon it. It would in truth require a volume by itself.

This, however, is the less necessary on account of Dr. Candlish's admirable work on the atonement, to which I would, in passing, call your attention. You will find sufficient materials there to enable you to judge for yourself on this momentous doctrine. All that I mean to do is, merely to advert to one or two points which may tend to establish you in the truth, and assist you in disentangling yourself from the snares laid for unwary feet in the present day.

I set out then with asserting that Christ is said in Scripture to have given himself as a

ransom and substitute for his Church, and to have done so in a way such as he has not done for any other beings.

This seems implied in the very first promise,—the promise regarding the woman's seed. Here we have at the very outset the identifying of Christ and his people,—the setting them before us as entirely *one* with him. For while it is especially Christ himself that is the woman's seed, it is doubtless also his church as one with him. His destinies and theirs are thus from the beginning represented as entirely one. We recognize here not only the Redeemer, but the chosen people, the people given him of the Father, with whom he identifies himself, for whom he is to substitute himself, and in whose behoof he is to do and to suffer,—to bruise the serpent's head, and to submit to the bruising of his own heel.

Or to present it in another aspect. Adam stands before us as the figure of Christ, Eve as the representative of the Church or "seed of the woman;" for it is evident that it is not all who are her seed according to the flesh that are here called her "seed," but only the chosen ones between whom and the seed of the serpent a deadly warfare was to exist. As there existed then a peculiar relationship between

Adam and Eve, so there exists between Christ and his Church. And as Eve was given to Adam by God as his wife, so is the Church given by the Father to Christ as his bride. Thus two personages stand before us from the beginning,—Christ and his Church, the Bridegroom and the Bride. We find them meeting us at every turn and in every page of sacred history. It is with their history that the whole Bible may be said to be occupied; and in the glorious consummation when the Lord returns, we find the same two personages that are seen at the beginning, coming forth in visible glory and brightness,—the long absent Bridegroom returning to the beloved of his heart, and sitting down with her in festal triumph at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Who chooses this bride for Christ? It is the Father. Who gives this bride to him? It is the Father. She is his eternal choice. She is his eternal gift to his beloved Son. She must then be the object of the Father's personal affection and regard. And as we know that this bride is composed of the great multitude that no man can number, so we are sure that each individual composing that multitude must be known and loved of the Father in a peculiar way. In the Father's purpose she is

from eternity the Bride, just as in that purpose the Son is from eternity the Bridegroom. She then must be a distinct object in the Father's eye, just as much as he is. And if so in the Father's eye, so also in the Son's. If she was an object of personal and peculiar affection to the Father, so also must she be to the Son. Yea, if we may so speak, even more so to the Son than to the Father. For she is *his own* in a peculiar sense,—his own in the Father's gift, his own in everlasting-betrothment,—his own in a way such as she can be to no other in the universe.

But the bride is a captive, and must be won from the enemy. She is a lawful captive, and a ransom must be paid. She is lost, and must be found. She is naked, and must be clothed. She is diseased, and must be cured. She is polluted, and must be washed. And who is to do all this for her? The Son himself. Her betrothed bridegroom. He as the bridegroom is to redeem her as his bride. All that he does for her, in seeking, ransoming, freeing, clothing, cleansing, he does for her as his bride, and because she is already betrothed to him in the Father's purpose. And will he go to redeem a bride whom he does not love? And will he love one whom he does not personally

know? Will he work a work for one whom he knows not? Will he shed his blood upon a vague peradventure that some lost ones will choose him and cleave to him? Will he pay down a priceless ransom, and then leave it to chance, or what is worse than even chance, man's sinful will, to determine who is to be his bride?

The work of Christ is the work not of a man for men, but of a bridegroom for his bride.

Next to Christ himself, it is his bride who is most glorious in the Father's eyes. It is she who is so specially to share the love of God,—the love of the Father and the Son; "as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." It is she who is to be brought nearest to the Godhead of any created being. It is she who is to share the royalty of the Son of God, to sit upon his throne, to wear his crown, and to wield with him the sceptre of universal dominion. From first to last then she stands out before the Father's eyes, and also before ours, as next to Christ, the one glorious and prominent object in Scripture. It has been well said that "time, past, present, or future, as regards the Church, is but the unfolding of the one THOUGHT of God concerning the elect."

The Father has prepared, and the Son has

purchased, a throne for her; and to raise her from the miry clay to that everlasting throne is the work which the Son of God undertook and accomplished. That work did all for her. It did not merely leave her within the reach of salvation—it made salvation sure, nay, it made glory sure, it made the crown and kingdom sure. The bridegroom came forth out of his royal palace to bring in the bride which the Father had given him. He loosed her cords, he opened her prison doors, he bound up her wounds, he threw his mantle over her, he made her meet for the kingdom, and when the day arrives when he shall appear in glory, he shall conduct her in joyful triumph into the kingdom prepared for her from the foundation of the world.

Or take another view. It is not merely Christ who is said to have died. His people are spoken of as dying with him. Very frequently does the Apostle Paul dwell on this idea,—representing the church as crucified with Christ, dying with him, rising with him, ascending up with him and sitting with him in heavenly places. In Jehovah's eye his people were with him all the time, from his coming into the world. He stood in their stead, and they were viewed as one with him from

his cradle to his cross, and from his cross to his throne. They were taken up to the cross with him. They died there with him. They went down to the grave with him. They came up again along with him. They ascended up along with him. Now I confess I cannot understand these expressions unless I believe in a definite number, for whom all this was specially done. I cannot see how it is possible for the atonement to be *indefinite*, so long as I read that in all its parts the church *was associated with Christ*. This renders *definiteness* an essential element in the idea of redemption.

But how can there be any truth in all this, if Christ had no special object in view in dying, save merely to render salvation possible to all, but certain to none? In that case he could only die as a man for his fellow-men—not as a substitute, not as a representative, not as a surety, not as a shepherd, not as a bridegroom at all. I put it to you, my friend, which of these is most in accordance with the word of God. Being myself what is called a millennarian, I confess this seems an important view, and weighs very strongly with me; but I am sure that even with others it cannot fail to have its weight.

It is the view which would present itself to

an eye looking from the past eternity into the future, contemplating the glorious issue. And it is the view which we hereafter shall, I doubt not, more fully realize when we get into that eternity, and begin to look back upon the whole finished scheme. Viewed from either of these points, the far past or the far future, the thing seems striking and vivid. I confess, that, standing as we do in the present in the very midst of the scenes, with the smoke, and confusion, and sin of the world around us, seeing but through a glass darkly, we may find it more difficult to realize this. But faith can rise out of these dark elements below. It can transport itself to either of these eternal eminences of which I speak ; and, looking at things as God looks upon them, contemplating *results* as He does, it will be able to realize God's purpose regarding the church in all the different stages of its progress now, as if it had actually been presented in visible brightness, and the other parts which confuse us hidden from view. The moment when the statuary is hewing out his statue is not the best time for ascertaining what he means. You must either look at his designs, or you must wait till he has finished his work.

In connection with this, I may appropriately

introduce here some of the many passages which represent Christ's work as a peculiar one on behoof of his church.

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," John x. 11.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine," John x. 14.

"I lay down my life for the sheep," John x. 15.

"Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep," John x. 26.

"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John xvii. 2.

"I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me," xvii. 9.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it," Eph. v. 25.

In these passages we hear Christ repeatedly speaking of those whom he calls *sheep*, and telling us he gave his life for them—for them in a peculiar sense, as he did for no other. It is as *a shepherd* that he dies with a shepherd's love and a shepherd care,—for his sheep as such.

Again, he prays for his own, for those whom the Father has given him, NOT FOR THE WORLD.

Can words be plainer? Here is certainly a distinction made, "I pray not for the world." Here, at least, is something peculiar, for his church alone.* And *one* such peculiarity is enough, at least, to answer the objections of adversaries. Some have said, Oh, but he prays for the world in another place. I answer, he does not. But even though he had, here is at least one prayer of Christ, in which he expressly leaves out the world. And who can say how much virtue there was in that one short prayer? Is not the way in which he prayed, an illustration of the way in which he

* A small pamphlet fell lately under our eye by an author who prints his name in *Syriac* characters on the title-page. The reason for such a peculiar display of learning is not very obvious, and cannot be guessed at without a breach of charity. Very possibly the writer can read the Peschito, but it was not worth his while to take such a way of making this known. It looks ill, and savors of affectation. The object of the book is to show that when Christ said, "I pray not for the world," he merely meant "I pray not for the *unity* of the world." The author tells us that unity would be a curse, not a blessing, to the world, and that, therefore, while Christ prayed for unity to the church, he prayed for the opposite to the world. So that when he said, "I pray *not* for the world," he was really praying most effectually for the world! This is certainly the very extreme of one-sided criticism,—criticism whose sole object seems to be to bend the Scriptures to a human theory,—to put them to the torture, in order to prevent their bearing witness against certain favorite doctrines. This commentator actually makes the Lord to pray that the world's strife and discord, that is, the world's *sin*, may be perpetuated: nay, that peace and harmony may be prevented; and he gives it as his opinion, that unity would not be a blessing but a curse to the world!

died. Are not those for whom he prayed, the same as them for whom he died?

Again, Christ is said to have loved the church as husbands love their wives. This surely is decisive. The love of the husband for the wife is such as he bears to no other. So is the love of Christ. And as was his love, even so was the purpose of his death. It is somewhat startling to be told that Christ loved the *world* just as much, and in the same way as he loved the *church*,—that "the seed of the woman" had no greater share in his purpose and affection than "the seed of the serpent,"—that it is man and not God that determines who are to constitute the members of that church,—that instead of their names being "written in the book of life, *from the foundation of the world*," they are merely written down at the time when *they* themselves determine to believe and be converted.

But over against all this are set those many passages in which the word *all* occurs, and in which we read "Christ died for all." Now, with reference to this, I ask your attention to a few remarks.

1. The passages I have already quoted are quite explicit, and cannot be overthrown. They are too plain to be mistaken. And if our oppo-

nents would take them in their simplicity, I confess I should have less fear with regard to others. But this they refuse to do.

2. I admit there are difficulties with regard to some of the passages in which the word *all* occurs. But I would rather confess the difficulty, and wait for further light, than at once proceed to do violence to the passage itself, or make its difficulty a reason for doing violence to others.

3. I also admit that there are passages in which there can be no doubt as to the universality of the terms. These you will find enumerated by Dr. Candlish, to whose work I again refer you. Such passages, says he, refer to the discovery which the work of Christ is "fitted to make of the Divine character, especially of the Divine compassion and benevolence, and are to be regarded as giving intimation of the widest possible universality. This is particularly the case in that most blessed statement, 'God so loved the world,' &c.; for we would be little disposed to qualify or explain away the term 'world,' as here employed. We would rather rejoice in this text, as asserting that the gospel has a most gracious aspect to the world, or to mankind as such." P. 26.

4. With regard to the meaning of the word "all" in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, a few remarks will be necessary. It occurs there upwards of 1200 times, as any scholar will find by consulting his Greek Concordance. These 1200 texts may be subdivided into four classes.

Class I. consists of a very large number of passages, several hundreds, I am sure, in which it is undeniable that the word *cannot* mean literally *all.* I give one or two specimens. We are told in one place, (Mark i. 5,) "there went out unto him *all* the land of Judea and they of Jerusalem, and were *all* baptized of him," &c. This we know was not literally the case. Every individual in the whole land did not come; for we are expressly told in another place, (Luke vii. 30,) that "the Pharisees and lawyers were not baptized of him." Again we read, (Mark i. 37,) "All men seek thee." Literally this was not true. Every individual in the human race, or even every individual in Judea, did not seek him. Again, we have such passages as these:—"He told me all that ever I did,"—"all things are lawful to me"—"all our fathers were under the cloud"—"all they who are in Asia are turned away from me"—"ye know all things."

Class II. consists of passages in which it is very doubtful whether *all* be literally universal. It may or it may not. There is nothing positively to determine it. "*Every* nation under heaven," Acts ii. 5. "*All* they which dwelt in Asia," Acts xix. 10. "The care of *all* the churches," 2 Cor. ii. 28. "*All* that dwell upon the earth shall worship him," Rev. xiii. 8. These are specimens of a very large class of doubtful passages, which, of course, can prove nothing as to the literal meaning of *all*.

Class III. consists of passages which are only determined to be literal by the context, not by the expressions themselves. The whole passage, taken together, fixes the literal universality. But were it not for that, the literal meaning would have been doubtful. "All ye are brethren," Matt. xxiii. 8. "All these things shall come to pass," Matt. xxiv. 6. "They all slumbered and slept," Matt. xxv. 5. "When Jesus had finished all these sayings," Matt. xxvi. 1. In all these passages, and many similar ones, it is not the word *all* itself that points out the strict universality; it is some other word that occurs along with it, such as "all *these* things"—"all *these* sayings." In these cases, while in one sense the word has a universal sense, in another it has a

limited one—limited by the words with which it is connected. It means all of a certain class, all of a certain number. So that we gather from these, that when *all* is to be understood literally, we must learn from the context what "all" it is that is to be understood—whether all of one nation, or all of another—whether all of one class, or all of another. And this consideration answers at once the oft-repeated argument, which consists merely in vociferating the word "all," as if the loudness or the frequency of the outcry were enough to demonstrate the meaning of the word. That meaning must be determined in each separate case by the other words, or other parts of the passage.

Class IV. are the passages in question, which are supposed to imply a universal atonement. On these I cannot enter here. They are, in point of numbers, the fewest of all the four classes. Our opponents say, that they must be interpreted literally. Let us see how the proof stands.

There are upwards of 1200 passages, in which the word "all" occurs in the New Testament. Of these a very large number cannot possibly mean literally *all*. Another large number are exceedingly doubtful. Another

large number are only proved to mean literally "all" by the context. The fewest in number of these four classes are those which are claimed by our opponents! You may judge of the strength of their argument.

The result of this statement is simply this, that the mere occurrence of the word "all" does not determine the question at all. Nothing but a careful examination of the whole passage can settle it. Do not then, I beseech you, be deceived by the loud repetitions of the words *all* and *every* which you hear, and which are intended to supply the place of more solid proof.

I should like to have entered into an examination of some of the passages often rested on. But this is impossible. I select one, as being one of the strongest, and also one that affords an admirable illustration of the necessity of looking at the context to determine the meaning of the word. It is Heb. ii. 9, "He tasted death for every man." It is literally "for each;" there is nothing about *men* in the original. The question then arises, what does the apostle mean by "each?" The context must settle it. It either carries us back to the "heirs of salvation," or forward to the "many sons." For obviously it must refer to some of whom

the apostle was speaking. Now, he was only speaking of the angels and of the many sons, the heirs of salvation, and of no other. It cannot be meant of the former, and therefore it must be of the latter. They may be said to be the peculiar theme of the whole chapter, and any one following the apostle's reasoning, would *naturally* understand this expression to refer to them. It is straining it to refer to any others. If it does refer to others, it might as well refer to angels; more naturally so than to the *world*, for he is speaking of them, but not of the world at all. The fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is an illustration of this. The apostle is treating of the resurrection of the *saints*, and not of the wicked. It is only by keeping this in view that his statements there regarding the "all" can be fully understood. So the *each* (πας) here referred to must be the *each* of those he was speaking of. And very strikingly is the singular used here,—not simply as individualizing the saints, but as doing so in connection with the *whole* work of Christ. *All* that Christ did, he did for each. His *whole* work, his *whole* propitiation, his *whole* tasting of death, belongs to each, just as much as if only one had been saved. The *whole* of what Christ did is the property of each saint. His

work is not made up of so many parts, or extending to certain dimensions, greater or smaller, according to the number of the saved; so that each of them only gets a *part* of himself, and a part of his work. No. His work is such, that each gets the whole of it,—the whole of his glorious self, and the whole of his glorious work. Each gets the benefit of his tasting death, as if endured for himself singly and alone.

But I cannot dwell longer upon this topic. I have merely thrown out a few hints, which may lead to stablish you in the faith, and may assist you in repelling the objections of opponents.

The real question before us is, was the atonement of Christ a definite or indefinite thing?* That is the essence and marrow of the controversy. It is upon this that the case hinges. There is a mighty difference between a definite and an indefinite work. Search the Scriptures, and see if the language in which they speak does not necessarily imply something definite and certain,—*something which infallibly secured the object for which the*

* I greatly prefer the words definite and indefinite, as descriptive of the opposite systems, than the words limited and universal. The former are far more exactly expressive of the real point at issue than the latter.

Son of God took flesh and died. That was, you know, "to bring many sons into glory."

I am, yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"For the transgression of my people was he stricken."—Isaiah liii. 8.

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John x. 11.

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."—x. 15.

"Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep."—John x. 26.

"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."—John xvii. 3.

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world."—John xvii. 6.

"I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me."—xvii. 9.

"Those that thou gavest me have I kept."—xvii. 12.

"For their sakes I sanctify myself."—xvii. 19.

"Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx. 29.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."—Eph. v. 25.

LETTER VII.

FAITH—THE GOSPEL—ASSURANCE.

"By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."—Eph. ii. 8.

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."—Rom. v. 1.

My dear Friend,

I find Scripture presenting *faith* to us in more aspects than one. It is sometimes called *hearing*, sometimes *knowing*, sometimes *believing*, and sometimes *receiving*, and sometimes *trusting*. Strictly speaking, it is simply *the belief of the truth*, yet it is referred to throughout Scripture under these different names. These may be said to be its different stages; and it is useful oftentimes to lay hold of it at each of these, and contemplate it under each of these views. They are not in reality the same thing, yet they are all *illustrative* of the same thing, and they all point to one object. The things which we *hear;* the truth which we *know;* the tidings which we *believe;* the gift which we *receive;* the being whom we *trust*, may be different in one sense, yet in another they are the same.

Some adopt so exclusively one aspect and others another, that the object itself is lost sight of. Some particular definition is fastened on and elevated into such prominence as to become little better than a party watchword, furnishing much matter for self-righteousness and self-confidence, no less than for the condemnation of others who may chance in somewhat to differ.

I see, for instance, a person glorying in what he calls his simple views of faith, and spurning every other idea of it but what he calls "the bare belief of the bare truth." I ask such an one, "where is your child-like *confidence* in God, where is the clinging to the cross, the *resting* of the soul upon Jesus HIMSELF as to the resting-place?* You are making a saviour of your faith, an idol of the truth. You are just as self-righteous and proud in your 'simple views of faith' as is the

* Thus Calvin speaks. After admitting that the general object of faith is the truth of God, he thus remarks,—"Faith hath no firm footing unless it be placed in the tender mercy of God. Why, then, do we dispute about faith? Is it not that we may lay hold of the way of salvation? Yet how can faith be saving unless in so far as it grafts us into the body of Christ? There is nothing therefore of absurdity, if, in defining it, we thus urge its principal effect; and by way of distinction, subjoin its general character, that special mark by which it distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever."—*Inst.* B. iii. ch. 2, § 30.

mystic whose religion you profess to shun. Your God seems to be a mere bundle of abstract propositions; your Saviour a mere collection of evangelical phrases, which you use as the mere *shibboleth* of a sect."

Again, I see another individual going into the opposite extreme. He overlooks the simplicity of faith. He undervalues the TRUTH. He is wholly occupied with some mystical actings of his own mind, and trying to exert himself to put forth some indescribable efforts which he calls receiving and resting on Christ. I say to such an one, "You are on the road to mysticism, if you be not already enveloped in its mists. You are occupied with your own self, with your own actings and feelings; and you are making a Saviour of these. You certainly need more simple views of true faith. You need to be recalled from your self-righteous perplexities about your own acts, to the precious word of truth which you are despising, as if it contained no comfort for you unless you can be conscious of putting forth certain acts of your own in connection with it."*

* No man wished more to avoid giving countenance to the idea, that faith is a bare intellectual act, than Mr. Robert Haldane, yet he does not scruple to use such language as the following,—"A man becomes righteous, perfectly righteous,

From this you will see how it is quite possible to admit the full meaning of those words in Scripture which speak of confidence, and trust, and rest, &c.; while, at the same time, we rejoice in those other expressions which represent faith as an "acknowledgment of the truth," and the salvation of the sinner as the result of his "coming to the knowledge of the truth." It is quite consistent with Scripture to represent peace as flowing from confidence in God through Christ, and yet as arising from "believing the record which God hath given of his Son."

I shall not, however, attempt a definition of faith. This only let me say in a few words, that that faith which goes no farther than the intellect, can neither save nor sanctify. It is no faith at all. It is unbelief. No faith is saving, but that which links us to the PERSON of a living Saviour. Whatever falls short of this is not faith in Christ. Hence, while salvation is described sometimes in Scripture as

through believing God's record concerning his Son."—*Exposition of the Romans.* Vol. ii. p. 554. Dr. Owen also thus writes, "Saving faith is our believing the record that God hath given of his Son. . . . Upon our acquiescing in this testimony, on our approbation of this way of saving sinners, or our refusal of it, our eternal safety or ruin doth absolutely depend."—*Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect. Works,* vol. xi. p. 500.

a "coming to the knowledge of the truth," it is more commonly represented as a "coming to Christ himself." "Ye will not come to ME that ye might have life." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

We often hear the expression, "coming to the truth" used as a description of conversion. Now the Bible word is "coming to the knowledge of the truth." Even this expression, however, is seldom used. The more frequent one is "coming to Christ;" not coming to *the truth*, but coming to the *True One*. It is strange how men should so much prefer the phrase "coming to the truth," to the more scriptural and blessed one "coming to Christ." It would almost seem as if they disliked the idea of a *personal* Saviour in the matter; or as if they had a secret suspicion that while their kind of conversion might be called a "coming to the truth," it could not be called a "coming to Christ" at all.

But whatever view of faith we take, one thing is obvious, that it is from first to last "the gift of God." Make it as simple as you please, still it is the result of the Holy Spirit's direct, immediate, all-quickening power. *Never attempt, I beseech you, my dear friend, to make faith simple, with the view of get-*

ting rid of the need of the Spirit to produce it. This, I believe, is one of the wretched devices of Satan in the present day. By all means correct every mistake in regard to faith, by which hindrances are thrown in the sinner's way, or darkness thrown around his soul. Show him that it is with the object of faith, even with Christ and his cross, that he has to do, not with his own actings of faith; —that it is not the virtue or merit that is in his faith that saves him, but the virtue and merit that are in Christ Jesus alone. Tell him to look outward not inward for his peace. Beat him off from his self-righteous efforts to get up a peculiar kind of faith or peculiar acts of faith in order to obtain something in himself—something short of Christ, to rest upon. Simplify, explain, and illustrate faith to such an one, but never imagine that thereby you are to make the Spirit's help less *absolutely necessary.*

This, I believe, is the aim of the propagators of the new theology. Their object in simplifying faith is to bring it within the reach of unrenewed man, so that by performing this *very simple* act, he may become a renewed man. In other words, their object is to make man the beginner of his own salvation. He

takes the first step, and God does the rest! He believes, and then God comes in and saves him.*

This is nothing short of a flat and bold denial of the Spirit's work altogether. If at any one time more than another the sinner needs the Spirit's power, it is *at the beginning*. And he who denies the need of the Spirit at the *beginning* cannot believe in it at the after stages,—nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit's work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over *that* without the Spirit, he will easily get over all the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to *believe*, he will not need him to enable him to *love*. If when a *true* object is presented to me, I can believe without the Spirit; then when a *lovable* object is presented, I can love without the Spirit. In short, what is

* After speaking of the "*convincing and converting efficacy of* EXTERNAL INFLUENCE," they add the following remark concerning sinners to whom these *external influences*, (affliction, disease, judgments, &c.,) had been applied—"When they have been convicted and disposed to believe him, he sends his word and heals them."—*Correspondence*, p. 42. "When the sinner is willing, then the Spirit begins to work," were the words used to myself by a maintainer of the new doctrine. It is only then on the willing that the Spirit works! Melancholy doctrine! for who are the *willing?* Surely some better class of sinners than those who inhabit this poor fallen earth!

there in the whole Christian life which I cannot do of myself, if I can *begin* this career without help from God? *The denial of the Spirit's direct agency in faith and conversion, is the denial of his whole work in the soul both of saint and sinner.*

But is it not said, "Faith cometh by hearing?" Certainly it is. And who doubts the blessed truth? How can there be faith where there is not something to be believed?* But does this mean that hearing alone is necessary to the production of faith? The words in the original explain this. They are these, "faith arises out of (ἐξ) what we hear, and what we hear comes to us through means of (διὰ) the word of God." Who then would say anything but what the apostle does here?—viz.: that the foundation of faith is what we hear,—(lit., a hearing or report.) But does this exclude the Spirit from his work in preparing the soul for believing what it hears?

Used in a right sense, I have no objection to the expression, so common even in our best writers, that it is "the truth which produces faith." And had it not been for the improper

* "There is an inseparable relation between faith and the word, and these can be no more torn asunder from each other than rays of light from the sun."—*Calvin's Institutes*, B. 3, ch. 2, § 6.

use made of it in the present day, no one would hesitate to use it. We are told that before the days of Pelagius there were many expressions in use, which, after his heresy arose, the fathers were afraid to employ. And so we find it here. Calvin, for instance, does not hesitate to speak of the word as that "by which faith is *conceived*."* And again, "Faith stands in no less need of the word than fruit does of the living root of a tree."† Again, Trail in one of his sermons thus speaks, "It is called the word of faith because it is the means of faith, *and begets faith:* what think you is faith, but only the impression, the stamp, that the word of the Gospel, when brought home with power, leaves upon the soul: it is the heart's echo to the voice of salvation by Christ in the Gospel."‡ Again, the same author thus speaks; "Believing is but thinking, it is no more; but it is a rare

* Unde fides concipiatur, Inst. B. 3, ch. 2, § 6.

† Ibid. B. 3, ch. 2, § 31. In like manner Calvin frequently speaks of faith, or of the truth, as producing life,—nay, he even speaks of our being regenerated by faith; but then on the other hand he as distinctly makes the Holy Spirit the real fountain of everything like life or regeneration. See for instance his commentary on John i. 12, 13. If you take merely one class of extracts, you would say that he gave countenance to some of the modern heresies, but if you look at others you will see that his meaning is totally opposed to these.

‡ Trail's Works, vol. ii. p. 103.

thing, it is a great thought."* In like manner Mr. Haldane makes this remark upon Rom. x. 17, "Faith never comes but by hearing, that is, from the word of God."†

I might quote many similar passages from the very best of our divines; but I need not.‡ These will show you that while they all held faith to be directly "the gift of God," they never hesitated to use such expressions as "faith is begotten by the word." The reason is obvious. If men separate faith from the word, they immediately fall into mysticism or quakerism. They torment and perplex themselves by an attempt to work up some feelings of their own, or they sit down and wait for the uprising of some inward light, or the coming down of new revelation.

And now, having said this much as to *faith* itself, let me add a few words as to that which it receives, "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." That which we preach, and that which faith believes, "is the glad tidings of great joy." It is God's testimony to his own character, his declaration of his gracious mind towards the sinner, the utterance of his manifold yearnings

* Trail's Works, vol. ii. p. 51.

† Exposition of Romans, vol. ii. p. 567.

‡ See a very strong one in Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted. Chap. ii. § 3.

over his lost and long-wandered offspring. That which we make known is the story of divine love. We tell men that there is such a thing as love in God towards the sinful; that this love hath found vent to itself in a righteous way, and that to the participation and enjoyment of this love ALL are welcome. We show them how God has opened up his *heart*, to let them see what riches of grace are there; and how he has done a work upon the earth by which we may measure the infinite dimensions of that gracious heart. These are the NEWS we bring. These are the tidings which we present to sinners, to be believed, and to be rejoiced in with joy unspeakable and full of glory. These tidings are *free;* truly, absolutely, unconditionally free. They are without money and without price. They make known the exceeding riches of the grace of God. They show us how these riches are pouring themselves freely out upon this fallen world. They tell us that not only is there *grace* in God for sinners, but also that that grace has found vent to itself, and is flowing down in a *righteous* channel to *unrighteous* men. They tell us that the darkness is past, and the true light has risen upon the world. They tell us that the veil is rent from top to bot-

tom, and that every sinner may go freely in. They tell us that there is forgiving love in the bosom of the Father, of which every sinner, without exception, is invited to avail himself. They point each wandering eye to the cross, that it may read there the Divine compassion, the yearning tenderness of Him who made us, towards the lost, the rebellious, the unholy. They come up to every man, and invite him to partake of all the fulness of God: they make no exception, but address themselves, in all their gladness and amplitude, to each man as he stands. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Hear the words of Trail: "Shall we tell men that unless they be holy, they must not believe on Jesus Christ; that they must not venture on Christ for salvation till they be qualified and fit to be received and welcomed by him? This were to forbear preaching the gospel at all, or to forbid all men to come to Christ. For never was any sinner qualified for Christ. *He* is well qualified for us; but a sinner out of Christ hath no qualification for Christ but sin and misery. . . . Shall we warn people that they should not believe on Christ too soon? It is impossible that they should do it too soon. Can a man obey the gospel command too soon;

or do the great work of God too soon? . . . If he should say, what is it to believe on Jesus Christ? As to this, I find no such question in the word, but that all did some way understand the notion of it. They all, both Christ's enemies and disciples, knew that faith in him was believing that the man, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God, the Messiah and Saviour of the world, so as to receive and look for salvation in his name. If he yet ask *what* he is to believe, you tell him that he is not called to believe that he is in Christ, that his sins are pardoned, and that he is a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ; and that this record is, that God giveth, (that is, offereth,) to us eternal life in his Son, Jesus Christ, and that all who with the heart believe this report, and rest their souls on these glad tidings, shall be saved. If he still say that believing is hard, ask what it is he finds makes believing difficult to him? Is it unwillingness to be saved? Is it a distrust of the truth of the gospel record? This he dare not own. Is it a doubt of Christ's ability or good-will to save? This is to contradict the testimony of God in the gospel. . . . If he say that he cannot believe on Christ, and that a divine power is needful to draw it forth,

which he finds not, you tell him that believing in Jesus Christ, is no work, but a resting on Jesus Christ, and that this pretence is as miserable as if a man, wearied with his journey, and who is not able to go one step farther, should argue, I am so tired that I am not able to lie down, when, indeed, he can neither stand nor go."*

But it may be asked, how is all this freeness consistent with Christ's substitution for his church alone? I answer, that the gospel is not "Christ died for the elect;" neither is it, "Christ died for all." But it is, "Christ died for sinners." It was thus that the apostles preached and that men believed. Any reader of the Acts of the Apostles may see this. They preached the glad tidings in such terms as these: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43. Or again, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," xiii. 38.

The passage in 1 Corinthians (xv. 3) is often

* Select Practical Writings of Trail, issued by the Cheap Publication Committee, pp. 153, 161.

appealed to as a proof that the apostles preached everywhere that Christ died for all. I have already remarked, that in the only book in which we have a full account of their preaching (Acts,) there is nothing of this kind stated. And, in regard to this passage, I would just ask any one, how it is possible to extort such a declaration out of it? The apostle went to Corinth. He stood up in a city of heathens. He cried out, "Christ died for *our* sins." He did not say "for all and every one;" nay, he did not say "for *your* sins;" he simply said "for *our* sins." Now I have no wish to restrict the gospel, or to make it appear as if not literally and actually free to all. But it is plain that the words here are more *restrictive* than usual. So much so, that had there been some cavilling hearer in the way, he might have said, like some modern objectors, —"Oh! he does not preach the gospel; he says, Christ died for *our* sins;" he should have said, "Christ died not for our sins only, but for the sins of *all*."

The man who lays the stress of what he calls the gospel upon the *all*, the *me*, or on the other hand, upon the *elect* or *the church*, plainly does not preach the gospel as the apostles did. And the man, who, in believing, is turning

his whole thoughts to these words, is going aside from the glad tidings themselves. He is thinking of nothing but *himself*, and the bearing of the gospel upon *himself* alone. He is losing sight of the glorious revelation of HIMSELF which God has made in the gospel, and is only concerned about that part of it which he thinks includes his own salvation.

But how is this, you will ask? For this obvious reason, that it is not with the work of Christ as a work done specially for myself, that I have in the first place to do, in believing, but as a work which opens up to me the grace of God. It shows me that there is such a thing as *grace*, or free love to sinners. It is the pledge of its reality and the measure of its extent and dimensions. Whether we suppose it to be a work done for many or few, still it is the declaration of God's free love, and it is that free love that is the sinner's resting-place. The real question that troubles an anxious soul is in substance this: "Is there free love in God, free love reaching even to the vilest,—free love which no amount of sin can either repel or quench? Is there enough of that free love to reach even to me and remedy a case like mine?" The work of Christ settles all these perplexities, and yet in settling them

it does not raise the question, "was that work done specially for me," any more than it raises the question, "am I elected or not?" It is the *meaning* of that work to which an inquirer has to look in the first place, not to its ultimate and particular destination. He who understands the character of God as the Lord God merciful and gracious, will not be disquieted by the subtle suggestion of the evil one, Am I elected? So he who understands the work of Christ, which is the grand exposition and opening up of that character, will never think of putting the question, Was that work specially intended for me? Apart from such a question, that work contains enough to remove all his fears.*

* "It is a real and important truth, that election and redemption are thus particular and sovereign, not universal nor conditional. But remember, though the redemption by Christ is not universal in its *intention*, yet it is so in its *proclamation*, which is to be universally believed for salvation: John iii. 14–19. Read over these verses, and you may see that here are good news, here are glad tidings indeed, presented to gain the confidence of poor helpless sinners. This free grace requires no previous marks or evidences of our own particular election or redemption, in order to afford immediate relief to the mind in believing it to be thus open and free. It is true God by his word requires us to believe the doctrines of particular election and redemption, in order to give us a view of the sovereignty of his grace, and to prevent us from thinking it to be any way conditional, or suspended upon any actings of ours. But yet it does by no means require us to believe our own particular election or redemption, in order to our hope God-ward. It presents the

"Christ died for ALL," it is said, and this is the gospel. Well, granting that it is so, what does this mean? Did he by dying infallibly secure salvation for all? Oh, no. Did he by dying infallibly secure the Holy Spirit for all? Oh, no. Did he by dying infallibly secure regeneration, and faith, and love, for all? Oh, no. Then, I ask, what is meant by his dying for all, beyond what John Owen lays down in his work on the death of Christ: "Sufficient was the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of the whole world, and for the expiation of all the sins of all and every man in the world?" Or wherein does their gospel present a freer or larger aspect to all men than does the following statement of a recent American divine:

"The righteousness of Christ therefore, consisting in the obedience and death demanded by the law under which all men are placed, is adapted to all men. It is also of infinite value, being the righteousness of the eternal Son of

redemption by Jesus Christ directly before us, as full and free; and wheresoever this takes proper effect upon the mind, conscience, and conduct, this is the proper and sure evidence of our own election. For our election of God is known by the gospel coming with power, 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. Say not then, Who shall ascend into heaven to see whether our names are in the book of life? But look into the gospel, and see whether thy name as a sinner be not *there*, and whether the grace therein revealed, is not free for thee and for any." —*Brief Thoughts on the Gospel.*

God, and therefore sufficient for all. On these two grounds, its adaptation to all, and its sufficiency for all, rests the offer made in the gospel to all. With this, its design has nothing to do; who are to be saved by it we do not know. It is of such a nature and value, that whosoever accepts of it shall be saved. If one of the non-elect should believe, (though the hypothesis is on various accounts unreasonable,) to him that righteousness should be imputed for his salvation. And if one of the elect should not believe, or having believed, should apostatize, he would certainly perish. These suppositions are made simply to show, that according to our doctrine, the reason why any man perishes, is not that there is no righteousness provided suitable and adequate to his case, or that it is not freely offered to all that hear the gospel, but simply because he wilfully rejects the proffered salvation. Our doctrine, therefore, provides for the universal offer of the gospel, and for the righteous condemnation of unbelievers, as thoroughly as Dr. Beman's. It opens the door for mercy, as far as legal obstructions are concerned, as fully as his; while it meets all the other revealed facts of the case. It is not a theory for one fact. It includes them all,—the fact that Christ died by covenant for

his own people; that love for his own sheep led him to lay down his life; that his death renders their salvation absolutely certain; that it opens the way for the offer of salvation to all men, and shows the justice of the condemnation of unbelief. No MAN PERISHES FOR THE WANT OF AN ATONEMENT, is the doctrine of the Synod of Dort; it is also our doctrine."*

But whilst such is the gospel, you will perhaps ask me what I think of the doctrine of assurance, as maintained by the holders of the new theology. On this point I have the following remarks to offer.

1. The doctrine of assurance is stated and pressed by many of them in a most arrogant and offensive way; so much so, indeed, that the word has become a suspicious one. They make a god of their assurance, and condemn with the utmost flippancy and ease every one who does not come up to their standard of assurance. Just *say* that you believe, *say* that you are perfectly assured of your salvation—join the sect, and this will cover many defects which others would not have consented to overlook. I have been often both amazed and shocked at the vain-glorious boastings of as-

* Hodge on the Extent of the Atonement.

surance, and the contemptuous condemnation of others, which are indulged in. Ah! it is easy to speak of assurance, to boast of it, to despise others for not having it; but it is not so easy to "walk *humbly* with our God." And I have seen such pride, such unmeekness, such boasting, such sectarianism, such censoriousness, such evil speaking, in connection with this pretended assurance, that I could not help coming to the conclusion, that the man who could boast of his assurance while indulging in such tempers, was deceiving himself or others most grossly, and had no title to the name of Christian at all. I am not prepared to deny the name of Christian to men, simply because they hold much that I conceive to be error; but I am quite prepared to deny such a name to the proud, the censorious, the uncharitable boasters of their assurance.

2. The doctrine of assurance is made wholly to rest upon the doctrine that Christ died for *all*, in the most universal sense. It is maintained that there can be no assurance if this be not its foundation.* "Christ died for *me*,"

* Perhaps these asserters of universal redemption might learn something from one whom in several respects they considerably resemble—Robert Sandeman. He remarks—

is that which every sinner is called upon to believe. Yet it is maintained, at the same time, that Christ did not die for any, so as actually to *secure* salvation for them, but merely to make it possible to them! And to believe that Christ died so as to make salvation possible to me, is all I need to believe in order to have assurance!

3. The doctrine of assurance sounds very strangely in the lips of men who deny the perseverance of the saints. No man, it is said, can be a Christian who is not assured of his salvation, yet a saint may fall from grace. Can any thing be more utterly absurd than this? In becoming a Christian, I am to be *quite sure of being saved*, yet I am also to believe that *I may fall away and be lost.* What is this but telling me that I am to be sure of heaven, and yet I am not to be sure of it? It is plain, then, that if the doctrine of the saints' perseverance be denied, there can be no such thing as assurance. It is an absurdity, an impossibility. The doctrine of assurance implies that of perseverance, and that of perseverance implies that of election.

"If Christ died for them who perish, then the happiness of them who are saved must be owing to something else beside his death."—*Letters*, vol. i. p. 26.

But having made these remarks, I would not leave the matter here. While I say these things, I am not denying assurance. Far from it.* I would maintain it most strenuously as a vital and momentous truth. The doctrine of the Reformation, and that which Popery hated so mortally, was, "that a man is justified through faith alone, and that he *must know that he is justified.*"† And in truth, HOW CAN THERE BE OTHERWISE PEACE OF CONSCIENCE, OR PEACE WITH GOD? But just in proportion as I would prize and preach the true doctrine of "assurance of God's love," and "peace of conscience," according to the words of our Catechism, in that very proportion would I condemn and warn you against the flippant, boastful assurance of our day. "Peace with God" is the most humbling, solemnizing, and sanctifying of all truths. And when I see no such fruits brought forth by those who speak of it so loudly, I would beseech you to be upon your guard, lest the peace into which you may thus be led be the peace of a seared conscience, or the peace of a

* Samuel Rutherford says, "Make meikle of assurance, for it keepeth your anchor fixed."—*Letters*, vol. ii. p. 174.

† See that precious little German work, Sanders' Jehovah Zidkenu, p. 20.

hard heart, or the peace of the devil, or the peace of the fancy or the flesh.

As to the doctrine of assurance, I should like to have spoken at some length. This, however, I cannot do without curtailing other points of much moment to which I am hastening on. To be as brief as possible, and to give greater weight to what I advance, I would quote from that admirable work of Mr. Haldane's, to which I have already referred. He thus writes:—"The full assurance of faith in which believers are commanded to draw near to God, stands inseparably connected with having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. An evil conscience accuses a man as guilty, as liable to punishment, and keeps him at a distance from God, regarding him as an enemy and avenger, so that the natural enmity of the mind is strengthened. On the contrary, a good conscience is a conscience discharged from guilt by the blood of Christ. Conscience tells a man that the wages of sin is death, and that he is liable to it; but when the atonement made by Christ is believed in, it is seen that the punishment due for sin, which is death, has been inflicted on him, the demands of the law have been fulfilled, and its penalty suffered. On this the believer rests, and his con-

science is satisfied. It is thus purged from dead works; and this is what is called the answer of a good conscience toward God. (1 Pet. iii. 21.) *This answer of a good conscience cannot be separated from assurance of our acceptance with him to whom we draw near, and the degree in which both this assurance and a good conscience are enjoyed will be equal.*

"The same is true respecting the grace of hope. This, as well as having a good conscience, purged from dead works (the duty of possessing which, no Christian will deny,) stand inseparably connected with the personal assurance of an interest in the Saviour, and all of them lie at the foundation of love to God, and consequently of acceptable obedience to him. We love him when we see that he hath loved us, and that his Son is the propitiation for our sins. How can there be love without a sense of reconciliation with God, and how can the fruits of joy and peace be brought forth, till the conscience is discharged from guilt? Love proceeds from a pure heart, a pure heart from a good conscience, and a good conscience from true faith.

"In the hope of the promised salvation they who received the doctrine of the apostles re-

joiced as soon as it was announced to them, Acts ii. 41; viii. 39; xvi. 34. Their joy then had not its source in reflecting upon or being conscious of their faith, although afterwards so confirmed, but arose from the view they had of the glory and all-sufficiency of the Saviour and his perfect righteousness, made theirs by faith, resting on the Divine warrant and promise. Although the assurance of sense be confirmatory of the assurance of faith, it is not so strong as the latter. 'Sanctification,' says Rutherford, 'does not evidence justification as faith does evidence it, with such a sort of clearness as light evidences colors, though it be no sign or evident mark of them; but as smoke evidences fire, and as the morning-star in the east evidences that the sun will shortly rise, or as the streams prove there is a head-spring from whence they issue;—so doth sanctification give evidence of justification only as marks, signs, effects, give evidence of the cause. But the light of faith, the testimony of the Spirit, will cause us, as it were, to see justification and faith, not by report, but as we see the sun's light.'

"If it be objected, that a man cannot know that he has faith without seeing its effects, it is replied that this is contrary to fact. When a thing is testified, or a promise is made to us,

we know whether or not we believe it, or trust in it. According to this objection, when Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest,' the eunuch should have replied, you ask me to tell you a thing I cannot know; but instead of this he answers, 'I believe.' When the Lord asked the blind man, 'Believest thou in the Son of God?' he did not ask a question which it was impossible to answer. 'In this first act of believing,' says Mr. Bell on the Covenants, 'sinners have no evidence of grace in themselves; they feel nothing within but sin; they see a word without them as the sole foundation of faith; and on that alone they build for eternity; this is a point of no small importance to saints and sinners.' Many of the modern builders are at great pains to keep their hearers from all confidence, till they first discern the evidences of grace in their hearts, and having got evidence, then, and not till then can they have any just, lawful, or well-grounded confidence; nay, they seem pretty plainly to intimate that a sinner's right to Christ turns on something wrought in him, or done by him, and till he have evidence of this he can claim no interest in Christ, nor assure himself of salvation by him. According to this, Christ, the tree of life, is forbidden fruit, which the sinner

must not touch till he has seen inward evidence. I confess that I have not so learned Christ. . . . The religion of the church of Rome leaves a man nothing but doubts respecting his salvation. It teaches that a Christian should believe in general the promises of God, while the application to himself of these promises, and the assurance of God's love, it calls presumption. This subject was one of the grand points of discussion between that church and the reformers. But how many Protestants have forsaken the ground which their predecessors here occupied, and have gone over to their opponents? The doctrine of the duty of our personal assurance of salvation, and the persuasion of our interest in Christ, is denied by many, and even doubts concerning this are converted into evidence of faith, although they are directly opposed to it. *Doubts of a personal interest in Christ are evidences either of little faith or of no faith.*"*

Such is the doctrine of assurance, as stated by one whose jealousy for every jot and tittle of Divine truth gives peculiar weight to all he wrote. And with this statement I leave the subject. The sentences I have quoted are worthy of being pondered. While they give

* Haldane on the Romans, vol. ii. p. 418–428.

no countenance to the boastful assurance of the false professor, they equally condemn those who either deny that there can be assurance, or who place it afar off,—at the end instead of the beginning of the believer's career; who discountenance the idea of its immediate possession; who actually prefer the doubting to the assured Christian; nay, who make doubts an evidence of faith, darkness an evidence of light!

There is great danger of making a Saviour of our actings, our feelings, or our faith. These may steal the heart away from Christ as effectually as the works of the self-righteous. The search for these, in which many seem to spend their lives, and which makes up the religion of not a few, is often Satan's subtle device for drawing the eye off from the cross of Christ.

There is oftentimes a far greater prominence given to what man *has to do* in order to be saved, than what God *has done* for his salvation. It is the latter, not the former, that contains the Gospel, for it is the latter that opens up the riches of the grace of God. It is not the sight of what we do or feel, but the sight of what Christ has done and felt, that relieves our consciences, removes our burdens,

and fills the soul with assured peace. As preachers of the everlasting Gospel, we come to tell the sinner not what he has to do, but WHAT GOD HAS DONE. It is this that is the "good news," the "glad tidings of great joy" which are freely preached to ALL. "I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not walk in darkness."*

And it is a *righteous* as well as a *gracious* Gospel which we preach. Christ's death has made it a righteous thing in God to send you the free message of salvation, a message as honest and sincere as it is free. God is making proposals to you! He is making them in real earnest. His heart is in unison with his words. He desires your return, and stands ready to welcome and to bless. His are no random words, no feigned invitations, no exaggerated or delusive promises. He does not

* We have somewhere read a statement to this effect, "that God offers salvation to them that believe, and to them alone." How absurd, as well as how unscriptural! Thus Satan drives men from one extreme to the other! As if salvation were not presented freely to ALL! As if the invitation were not "WHOSOEVER WILL, let him take of the water of life freely." To say that God offers salvation to those that believe, is to make our faith the cause or ground of this offer, which is, in truth, a worse kind of Arminianism than that which is professed to be condemned. God presents salvation to *all;* he *gives* it to those that believe. The presentation is *universal;* the bestowment is *special.*

mean to mock or deceive you. "Remember," says Dr. Owen, "that the proposal made unto you this day cost no less than the price of the blood of the Son of God. It is the fruit of the travail of his soul. For this he prayed, he wept, he suffered, he died. And shall it now be neglected or despised by you? Will you yet count the blood of the covenant a common thing? Will you exclude yourselves from all benefit of the purchase of those terms, and only leave your souls to answer for the contempt of the price whereby they were purchased."*

I am yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."—Isa. xlv. 22.

"Hear, and your souls shall live."—Isa. lv. 3.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

"He who heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."—John v. 24.

"These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."—John xx. 31.

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."—Rom. iv. 5.

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* On the 130th Psalm, p. 633.—*Tract. Soc. Edition.*

"Being justified by faith we have peace with God."—Rom. v. 1.

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."—Eph. iii. 12.

"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us."—1 John iv. 16.

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."—1 John v. 11.

LETTER VIII.

MAN'S INABILITY.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"—Jer. xiii. 23.

My dear Friend,

You ask me what I think of the distinction commonly made between moral and physical inability. I answer, that to a certain extent it is a right one. For clearing off certain difficulties and obligations it is excellent; for bringing out man's responsibility, and man's real guilt, it is often most useful. For many speak of their helplessness as a mere *misfortune* which has somehow or other befallen them, but for which they are not responsible, and which infers no guilt on their part.* But it must not be carried too far. It must not be abused or misunderstood.

The distinction, we say, is a good one, and ought never to be lost sight of. There is, for

* "They are fearful words, 'Ye would not.' You will remember this against another day, as our Saviour says to the Jews, 'ye will not come to me that ye might have life. *Whatever is pretended, it is will and stubbornness that lie at the bottom of the refusal.*'"—*Owen on the* 130*th Psalm.*

instance, a great difference between my being determined not to go to church, and my being held from it by force. In the one case I am guilty, in the other I am not. The former is called *moral*, and the latter *physical* inability.

But I fear we cannot carry this distinction so far as some would have it carried. You say, why not? I answer, because if we make everything to turn upon this distinction, we must maintain, that wherever there is guilt, there can be nothing *physically* wrong with the guilty person; nothing so thoroughly wrong with him as to paralyze his moral powers, so that their free play in the direction of what is good is impeded. Anything like physical infirmity or inability of any kind would render him irresponsible.

The question is often asked, "Is moral depravity possible, if there be any physical (or if you like to call it constitutional or organic) incapacity?" Now, in answering this, allow me to put another which must be previously answered, "Is moral depravity possible, if there be nothing *physically* wrong with the soul?" I apprehend not. In moral depravity the mind or soul is diseased; that is to say, some physical change has passed upon them; some change which has acted upon the *soul* in

the same way as palsy or fever acts upon the *body* and its organs. Sin has brought on a real alteration of their nature. For how can a thing be diseased and not in its nature altered? Can the tree rot and yet remain unchanged? Can the limb be palsied, and yet remain physically the same? Can the soul be corrupted, and yet be physically unaltered? Impossible! One depraved act might not necessarily infer a physical change, but a depraved *nature* must. "The people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed."*

If then this be true, the distinction alluded to will not suffice to carry us through all the intricacies of this controversy. If we admit *sin*, we must admit a change in the constitution of the soul. You may call that change a moral one. And no doubt it is. But it is also a physical one, that is, a change in our very nature, just as really as leprosy is a change in the nature of the body. Hence, while you may say that the sinner's inability is a moral one, you cannot help admitting that there is something more involved in it. Nor have I any doubt that it was this something more that the prophet alluded to, when he

* Matt. xiii. 14; Acts xxviii. 26.

said, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots;" and that Christ alluded to when he said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" or again, "No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father," John vi. 44, 65.

Is then this physical change, or deterioration, or inability, or by whatever name it is called, consistent with *responsibility?* This is the question. Let us examine it calmly, and see how it stands.

Men are depraved. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."*

This depravity is thorough and total. Ev-

* Finney of America, who holds almost exactly the same views as the Pelagians on this side of the Atlantic, ridicules the idea of taking this text literally. He maintains that a sinful *nature* is an absurdity, and that our *natures* as they come into the world, are as good as Adam's was; see his Lectures on Professing Christians, pp. 181 and 301; and his imitators in this country are rapidly advancing to the same point. Some of them seem to have reached it. An anonymous writer well remarks—"It is one of the most refined delusions of Satan to make sin appear an accidental thing, rather than the corruption of the whole moral constitution. Every attempt to make sin consist only in the outward act, has led to the nullifying of the atonement, and to the substitution of morality for Christ's holiness."

ery imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. It has deteriorated the soul in all its powers. It has not certainly taken away any powers or faculties from the soul, but it has most materially affected our power of using them aright. If you admit depravity in any degree, you must admit deterioration, and consequently less physical power for willing and acting right. Does, then, this enfeebled capability infer diminished responsibility and guilt? We have already, so far, answered this question. We answer again, that it does not, and cannot do so—unless this inability has been *forced* upon us by another mightier than ourselves. If it is a *voluntary* inability—voluntary at its commencement, and voluntary throughout all its progress, then the guilt remains. Whatever name we may give to it, still if it be an inability into which the heart and will enter—an inability in which we acquiesce, nay rejoice, then it is sinful, and we are responsible. And this is the answer to the objection sometimes adduced, "We were born in this state; it was the fall that did this." Allowing it to be so, and granting what extenuation you please on this account—still is it not a *fact* that you are of *your own will* an enemy to God? Is it not a *fact*,

there is nothing compelling you to hate God? Is it not a *fact*, that every step you take is voluntary, and that every feeling you cherish towards God is entirely unconstrained and unforced from without? If so, then there is still an awful mass of guilt for which you are accountable, even though you could prove that the origin of it may be urged as an extenuation or excuse. Whatever the fall did, it never forced you to commit a single sin. Whatever may be your original corruption, you cannot say that it ever compelled you to sin against your will. And is it not folly as well as profanity for a sinner to be casting the blame of the evil that he does upon some foreign cause, when he is all the while conscious that he is doing it of his own will. It is vain, and worse than vain, to attempt to unfasten our guilt from ourselves, and fix it on our birth, or our education, or our circumstances. These may *account* for our sin, but they cannot *annul* it. They may in part explain our conduct, but they cannot prove our innocence or secure our acquittal.

The question does not turn solely upon the kind or amount of inability, but upon this—is it or is it not inability produced or perpetuated by our own deliberate choice? Did not

God give you ability, and you threw it away? You could not, indeed, throw away the *powers* themselves, love, judgment, memory, and such like; but you did what was far worse—you disabled and besotted them, so as to make them only capable of acting wrong. You changed the physical organization of these powers from good to evil; and will you, after all this, venture to say, that you are not responsible for the change? You have done the evil, and you cannot undo it. But we are responsible for many things which we cannot undo. If we wilfully do them we are guilty. If a pilot undertakes to steer your vessel into port, and then deliberately besots himself so that he *cannot;* is he not responsible? Rather, is he not doubly responsible, doubly guilty; guilty for not doing the thing contracted for, and guilty for rendering himself unable to do it? Is not the fact that he himself has rendered the doing of what he undertook a physical impossibility, an aggravation of his guilt? If a stronger than he were to imprison him, and prevent his executing his trust, that would be a very different case. He would not then be guilty. In that case he could in no sense help it. His inability was not his own doing at all. His not doing the

thing which he undertook, arose neither from his unwillingness, nor from his refusal to exercise the powers given him, nor from his having perverted them or thrown them away. None of these being true, he is not guilty. But if any of them should be true, he would be guilty, even if he should plead physical inability. If he wilfully wasted or destroyed his powers, he would be responsible for the complete exercise of them still.

On any other supposition, there would be no such thing as right and wrong, nor any such thing as responsibility at all. If a man is not responsible for that which he is now unable to do, when he himself is the real cause of the inability, then nothing can be more easy than to evade responsibility altogether. If I have a disagreeable duty to perform, I have only to induce disease, or maim my limbs, and then I am no longer responsible for the neglect! If I have to pay a debt of a hundred pounds, I have only to throw away the money or misspend it, and then I am no longer responsible for it! Nay, I may contract debts to any amount, and no man can make me responsible for them, if I can only prove myself unable to pay them. This was exactly Jonah's way of avoiding the danger and pain of carrying God's

message to Nineveh. He fled away so as to make it physically impossible for him to go to Nineveh, as if the Lord would be mocked with such an excuse! If the simple fact of a person's being unable to perform a thing excuse him for the neglect of it, then moral obligation must be very loose and uncertain, and the law of God a thing easily dispensed with or trifled away.

The real question is not simply, Am I unable? but, How did this inability come to pass? Have I destroyed and disabled myself, or did God do it? It is in vain to plead inability, so long as it is true that I produced it myself, in direct opposition to the will of him that made me; and so long as I am daily perpetuating and strengthening it, willingly and deliberately. We may in many cases measure a man's guilt by reference to his present resources and capacities; but God measures it by reference to the original powers conferred upon him, and which he has deliberately thrown away. To measure it by any other standard would be to give man the entire power to fix the amount of his own guilt, and estimate its penalty.

It is vain to say, Oh yes, man is responsible for the *act* of throwing away his powers, but

not for everything that has happened to him, or been done by him, in consequence of these being disabled. I answer, if a man is responsible for the first act, then he is so for all the others; for what are the others but a repetition of the first? And even though they were not, yet in every act the measure of responsibility must be the power which God gave him to perform the act aright. You may say, perhaps, Yes, man is responsible for everything into which his will enters; but not beyond the degree of will involved, or the degree of power possessed. Now, I admit that more or less of will must be involved in what a man does.* Even what are called involuntary movements, both of body and soul, have perhaps more of the will in them than we suspect, however unconsciously brought into play. Hence in things which seem the mere result of physical constitution, there may be a far greater amount of will than we imagine. So that to determine the amount of *will* in anything is a matter of exceeding difficulty. In any particular sin it is impossible for us to say how much may be the result of will, and how

* "There is no command given unto men for evangelical faith or obedience; but they can and do put forth a free positive act of their wills in the rejection of it."—*Owen's Works*, vol. ii. p. 337.

much of power. How vain then to say, we must ascertain how much will and how much power are involved in an action, before we determine the amount of guilt.

I do not maintain that the Holy Spirit creates new faculties or powers in us. No. He renews all our faculties, but he creates no new ones. Faith is not a new faculty, neither is love, neither is trust. What is faith, but the soul believing; what is love, but the soul loving; what is trust, but the soul trusting? The work of the Spirit is to *renew* the soul, not to *annihilate* it; and being renewed, it believes, and loves, and trusts, when that which is true, and lovable, and trustworthy is presented to it. In its unrenewed state it rejects all that is true and lovable and trustworthy in God. Not till the Holy Spirit's renewing hand is laid on it will it receive these. But in all this there is no creating new faculties in the soul; there is simply the "renewing us in the spirit of our minds."

I am willing to admit that we have all the *powers* that man ever had. We need no more. We require no new powers to be created in us. But then the right action of our powers—their action in the direction of what is good, is totally suspended, palsied, prostrate. The *power*

of using these powers aright is gone.* These *powers* we still possess, the *power* we have cast away. I have all the bodily limbs that Adam had; but the power to use them is not like his. I have all the mental and moral powers which he possessed, but the power to use them I have sinned away. Now, it is the possession of the *powers* that makes me responsible, not simply the possession of the *power*. If I came into the world bereft of intellect, then I could not be expected to understand truth, nor commanded to believe it. But if my understanding remain, however paralyzed and darkened by sin, I am responsible. If I came into the world without a conscience, I could not be commanded to keep the holy law of God; but if I have a conscience, however depraved by sin, I am responsible for keeping it. If I came into the world without a heart to love, any more than the worm beneath my feet, I could not be enjoined to love. But if I have a heart still, however changed in regard to its tastes, then I am responsible up to the extent of my original powers of loving. If I came into the world without a will, like a stone, I could not

* Yet we say with Owen, "It is granted that there is in man a natural remote passive power to give obedience unto God."—*Works*, vol. ii. p. 335.

be guilty; but if I have a will, though utterly set against God, utterly in bondage to sin, then I am responsible up to the full measure of that for which that will was at first given.

Man is truly a far more depraved being than many seem to suppose. The seat of his disease lies far deeper than they imagine. They would make it a very superficial thing, easily cured, by a mere act of his own will. God makes it very different,—deep-seated, awfully malignant, utterly incurable, save by the direct forthputting of the will and power of God.*

Grant that the *seat* of the disease is the *will*, still the case remains unaltered. The will must have undergone a change, so that it is not now what once it was. The *will* has become depraved, and that depravity can only be removed by the mighty power of God. Let the seat of the malady be where you like, still it is a malady of such a nature as to re-

* I am surprised that any one should maintain that the physical organization of our souls does not suffer, and is not deteriorated by our fall. Look at the savage, and see how his mental and moral capacities have suffered. They have shrunk and withered up like a limb that is cramped or out of use. Look at the uneducated man, it is the same with him. Look at the drunkard, it is the same with him. Their whole soul is deteriorated, and physically injured. They are not capable of comprehending or relishing truth, to which in other circumstances they would have been perfectly adequate. I say nothing as to the means to be employed for rectifying this disease and incapacity: I simply advert to the *fact*.

quire the interposition of Omnipotence for its cure.

The question then comes to be, not what is the disease, or what is the seat of it, but is it capable of removal by any but God? Grant that there is no inability but what is entirely moral, not physical at all, still the question recurs, is the removal of that moral inability more within man's power than the removal of the physical? If both are equally beyond his power, though in a different way, then really the stress laid upon the distinction between moral and physical inability, though right in itself perhaps, is still far away from the real point before us. My determination not to enter a church is a very different thing from my being positively unable to do so; yet practically they come to the same point. And the real question is, whichever of the two it be, How is it to be removed? That which concerns me most is not so much the precise seat of the disease, as the amount of power required to cure it. And whether we count our inability a moral or physical one, there can be no doubt that it can only be removed by God.

I press this point for the following reason: As long as the distinction between moral and physical inability was brought out for the pur-

pose of enforcing the sinner's responsibility, there could be no harm in it. Nay, it was right. But when it is brought out in order to prove to the sinner that his disease is of such a kind, that he can remove it all by an act of his own will, then we are called upon to guard against the conclusions drawn from the distinction, and to clear up the distinction itself. I have no doubt that the reason of its being so much dwelt upon by some, is in order to show the sinner that he has the power to heal the disease, or at least to commence the healing process, without the *direct* interposition of God.

Make then the inability small or great, make it natural or moral, make it of whatever kind you will, still this fact comes prominently out, that man cannot remove it. God alone can do this. Man is utterly helpless. God must interpose; and in whatever way he interposes, there is a testimony of man's helplessness. If God must interpose, either directly or indirectly, then up to the amount of power put forth in that interposition, I am counted by him as helpless. With this question the mode of operation has nothing to do. At another stage of the question this point will be discussed; but here we speak, not of the

necessity for a particular kind of operation, but for any operation at all, mediate or immediate. Without the Spirit working in some way or other, it is admitted by all, that man would remain an unbeliever. Is he not then responsible for this unbelief—an unbelief which it requires the Spirit to remove? If it is confessed that he is responsible in such circumstances, then I answer, the whole question is conceded; for it is granted that he is responsible for that which without the Spirit never will be done by him.

A favorite argument with many is, "How can a man be called on to believe if he is not able of himself to do so? and how can the gospel be free if man be unable of himself to receive it?" On this I would make the following remarks:—

1. This is a wrong way of settling the matter. The true question is as to what Scripture says, and not as to what we think. Now, Scripture does call upon us, and command us to believe, yet declares also our entire helplessness. Both of these things are true, whether we can reconcile them or not. The truth of either of them does not depend upon our being able to adjust and explain them, but simply upon God's declaration concerning them. He

has revealed both, and it is not for us to ask *how* can both of these be true, or to refuse to admit one of them, because it appears to our reason inconsistent with the other. We know so little of the things of God, and are so utterly unable to reconcile many things much plainer than these, that it becomes us to be silent. God commands men everywhere to believe and repent, yet he says, "no man can come to Christ unless it be given him of the Father." Let us receive both of these statements, for both are of God. It is sad, indeed, when men will not believe what God tells them, unless their own reason can approve of it. There can be little reverence for God when men will not receive his revelation unless borne out by the demonstrations of their own erring reason. There can be little reverence for the Bible when men will not admit one of its plainest statements, because they cannot see how it accords with another to which they happen to be particularly attached. There may be perfect harmony, though we do not see it.*

* "The word goes on in its way, not obviating every possible mi-conception, not giving anxious pains to show how this statement which it makes and that agree. It is satisfied that they *do* agree, and lets those that are watching for an offence take it . . . It is ever the manner of that word,

How foolish, then, and unreasonable to dwell upon such apparent contradictions, as if these could settle the question. Christ commanded Lazarus to come forth. Did that prove that Lazarus could do it of himself? How profane, as well as foolish, would it be to say, Lazarus could not be entirely dead; he must have had some life and power remaining, else Christ would never have commanded him to come forth.

But, some one will say, there is a mighty difference between this instance and the matter before us. I grant there is; but the difference is all against such an objector. It does not matter what you call the kind of death or the kind of inability, it may be moral or it may be physical, still it *is* death, and it *is* inability. It is such a death and such an

now boldly to declare its truth upon this side, and then presently to declare it as boldly and fearlessly on the other, not painfully and nicely balancing, limiting, qualifying, till the whole strength of its statements had evaporated, not caring though its truths should seem to jostle one another. Enough that they do not do so indeed. It is content to leave them to the Spirit to adjust and reconcile, and to show how the rights of each are compatible with the rights of the other, and not compatible only, but how most often the one requires that the other have its rights before it can truly have its own. . . . It is this glory of Scripture that its harmonies lie deep; so deep that to the careless or perverse ear they may be sometimes taken for discords."—*Trench's Hulsean Lectures*, pp. 118–120.

inability as requires to be removed by the power of another.

And this is enough. Even where the power of another must go forth in order to enable the person to comply with the command, the command is quite consistent with man's responsibility. It is needless then to discuss the question of moral and physical inability. All I contend for here is an *inability which the power of another is required to remove.* In consistency our adversaries ought to maintain that wherever the inability is of such a kind as to require the aid of another, then moral obligation ceases. In this point of view it does not matter what the inability be, or where it lies. If it be so great, or of such a nature as to require the forthputting of the Spirit's power for its removal, then, according to the new theology, the sinner is not responsible, and God is unjust in commanding or inviting. *We* say, if the sinner produced the inability he is responsible. *They* say, no; he is not responsible, unless he is able to remove it himself. So that it would just come to this;—if you say that the Spirit's help is absolutely necessary in conversion, and that the sinner cannot convert himself, you make him no longer a responsible agent,—no longer a person to whom

commands or invitations can be honestly or consistently addressed.

It is remarkable, also, that it is from *resurrection* that many of the expressions are taken regarding the power required to convert the soul. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." It is then the exceeding greatness of his power that is required to raise us. It is the same mighty power which raised Christ—nothing less than this. It is more than creation-power. It is *resurrection-power*.

2. Upon *any* theory regarding the Spirit's work the same difficulty occurs, and the same question may be put regarding man's responsibility for believing the gospel. If I entirely deny both the being and the work of the Spirit, I can consistently put the question, how can you ask a man to believe, and yet say that he needs the Spirit in order to this? But if I admit that the Spirit's aid is necessary in any sense, then I admit that but for that help the sinner would not or could not have believed. And what is this but confessing the great

truth, that man is in himself helpless, but still responsible—that man cannot, or at least will not, believe without the Spirit—yet still that he may be called upon to do so, and condemned for not believing? Let me grant that the Spirit does not operate directly, let me admit this to the fullest extent;—still it remains true that his indirect operation is absolutely necessary, and that without it the sinner's unbelief would remain immovable. If then there is an admission of the necessity of the Spirit's agency in any degree or mode, then there is a confession that man in himself is helpless, and yet responsible. You must either deny the Spirit and his work totally, or else admit the sinner's responsibility even in the midst of his helplessness.

3. Let me grant that the inability is wholly in the *will* and nowhere else: that the sinner *can*, if he *will*, do everything in believing, &c. Does this get clear of the difficulty? By no means. For still the *will* being wholly set against God presents the grand obstacle. God sees that man never *will turn* of his own accord, and yet he invites, entreats, and commands him to do so. Is not this as great a difficulty as ever? Allowing that it places the question of the sinner's responsibility in a

truer light, does it throw any light upon God's reasons for entreating sinners to do what he knows they never will? I might still ask the question, and insist upon a solution of the difficulty, "Why does God call on us to turn, when he knows we never *will* do so until he turns us? Is it not mockery in God to plead with us, and ply us with arguments and motives, when he knows quite well that we never will comply with these of our own accord? Here is the great difficulty,—a difficulty which exists in our opponents' system as well as ours,—a difficulty which, even upon their principles, would lead to the conclusion that God is insincere in what he says,—giving us invitations which he knows will never be complied with.

4. Let me again grant that the inability is entirely *moral*, entirely in the will, how does this clear up matters? Moral inability I should imagine to be something much *worse* than physical inability,—something much more difficult to remove. And if so, I may well ask, How is moral inability consistent with the commands of God in the gospel? It may be a different thing from the other kind of inability; it may preserve man's responsibility, but how does it in the very least furnish an answer to the question before us? If then the moral

be worse than the physical inability, any prospect of the sinner's believing, turning, &c. of his own accord, and unacted upon by another, is wholly at an end. The impossibility, or at least the unlikelihood, of such a thing, is increased, not diminished. And how is that moral impossibility or unlikelihood to be overcome? Only by God. If so, why does God call on the sinner to do that which is *morally*, though not physically, impossible?

5. God commands the sinner to keep the whole law, in every jot and tittle. The command is a just one. Man is responsible for obeying it. But does this prove that unrenewed man is able to keep the whole law? A man's being unrenewed does not free him from his obligation to keep the law. He is still bound to do so even in his unrenewed state. But does this prove that in that state he is also *able* to keep it? According to some, it does; otherwise God would not be just in enjoining him to keep it. But further, a man has the same power to keep the law as he has to believe the gospel. His powers for both are of necessity the same, unless a new faculty be required in order to his keeping the law. If, then, he can believe of himself, he can keep

the law of himself. He is equally responsible for both.

6. God commands us to "make ourselves new hearts," Ezek. xviii. 31. Are we able to do this? Not even the advocates of free-will maintain this.* They admit that a man cannot convert himself, and give himself a new heart. Yet God commands us to do this, and tells that if we do not do this, iniquity will be our ruin. We are responsible for making our hearts good, for we made them evil. It is no excuse to say, we have made them so evil that we cannot renew them: it is beyond our power. We are responsible for all the evil that we have done, whether we can undo it or not; and God is righteous in saying to us, Do this good, or undo this evil.

These considerations may help to show us that man's utter helplessness is not at all inconsistent with God's authority over him, and that it is quite possible to hold the doctrine of man's inability, and yet to press upon him the command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" nay, to say, "Ye *will* not come unto me, that

* Finney of America does maintain this; and thus far he is self-consistent. But few are so bold. The harmony of their system requires and implies it; but they shrink from a harmony involving such consequences, at least they have done so as yet.

ye might have life;" "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die;" "whosoever *will* let him take of the water of life freely."

It is not surely very difficult to see the consistency between man's helplessness and his responsibility to obey the calls to believe, to turn, to repent. For these calls are not to anything save what the sinner feels he is bound to do, whether he be assisted or not in the doing of them. Those feelings which the Holy Spirit works, are *just what every man ought at all times to have*, and which he is guilty for not having. If that which He wrought was something alien to our being, something so entirely new, that we could form no conception of it, then the inconsistency would exist. But since he only does for us, and in us, that which we ought always to possess, and for which we are responsible, the consistency is plain and indisputable.

As to the freedom of the will, I must be content with a few remarks. Philosophers and Pelagians say that man's will is free; Scripture says that it is in bondage. I admit that God does not force it, that the devil cannot

force, that nothing outward can force it. I admit that man is a *free agent* in what he does, in so far as anything outward is concerned. But still his will is a captive. Christ says, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;" and he adds, "If the Son make you *free*, ye shall be free indeed." Does this not mean, that till Christ make us free, we are not free? Paul also speaks of our being the "servants of sin,"—of our being "carnal, sold under sin;" and Peter says, "They promise them liberty, while they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage." (2 Peter ii. 19.) Let these passages suffice for those who boast of the freedom of the will. But, indeed, if they have not learned, in their own bitter experience, the miserable bondage of their own will, and the sad dominion which sin has over them, I despair of convincing them either by reason or Scripture.*

* How like men speak now-a-days to the carnal Jews of old, when Christ told them that they were not free: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"—John viii. 33. Thomas Adam, in his Private Thoughts, has the following remark:—"It is the general opinion of mankind, and what the fathers (Chrysostom and others), flourish much on with great confidence, that the will is free. I do not find it so. The captivity of the will is my misery and great complaint before God; nor do I think that if it were *in equilibrio*, any man on earth would choose evil."

But you, my dear friend, know something of the struggles of a soul in bondage. Even when rejoicing in forgiveness, and walking in the liberty which the Son hath given, we are continually made to feel the remains of our former bondage, and to cry out because of it. Our chains no longer bind us, but their fragments still remain upon our limbs. And if even now we feel the traces of our bondage, how heavy and sore must it have been in other days! Our wills, our faculties, our whole nature, were in bondage. We were not free till Christ made us so. And it is in this that we rejoice; we once were the slaves of sin, now we are set free; once it had dominion over us, now we are delivered from its yoke! And instead of being less free, because filled and moved by the indwelling Spirit, we are all the more free. It is his omnipotent interposition that gives us liberty. We were helpless bond-slaves before. Blessed be the name of him who sent from above, and took us and drew us out of many waters! Blessed be his glorious name forever, who hath opened our prison-gates, and brought us forth out of the low dungeon to breathe in gladness the fresh air of a heavenly day!*—I am yours, &c.

* Those who say that the whole disease lies in the *will*,

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."—Gen. vi. 5.

"The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."—Deut. xxix. 4.

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."—Job xiv. 4.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."—Ps. li. 5.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."—Jerem. xvii. 9.

"Neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth (purposeth) to reveal him."—Matt. xi. 27. The word here is *βουλομαι*, I purpose, not merely *θελω*, I will.

"Their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed."—Matt. xiii. 15.

"Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."—John i. 13.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."—John iii. 6.

"No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."—John vi. 44.

"No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."—John vi. 65.

"I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. . . . The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin."—Rom. vi. 14–18, 19–23.

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."—Gal. v. 17.

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and nowhere else, must have some difficulty in sympathizing with Paul, when he said, "*To* WILL *is present with me, but* HOW TO PERFORM *that which is good I find not.*" I would earnestly recommend the careful study of the seventh chapter of the Romans in connection with this letter.

"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."—Eph. ii. 1.

"Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness.'—Eph. iv. 19.

"Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin."—2 Pet. ii. 14.

NOTE.

The following paragraphs may help the reader to understand how man may be a free agent, and yet in bondage to sin. "Has not man liberty in respect of the *law*, as well as of the *Gospel?* Does he, in any instance, break the law against his will? Surely not. If a bias of mind to evil tends to destroy free agency, then the devil can be no free agent, and so is not accountable. The same holds true of a bias to good; neither God, nor Christ, nor saints in glory, are capable of doing wrong. The bias of their minds is so invariably fixed to holiness, that it is impossible they should in any instance deviate from it, and yet will any one deny them to be the subjects of free agency?"—*Fuller.*

"Sinners are free and voluntary in their bad temper. Did anybody force them to be of such a bad temper? Surely no. Their hearts and wills were in it. . . . The stronger any inclination is, the more full and free the heart and soul is in the thing. Hence the habitual bad inclination of the devil is at the farthest distance from any compulsion. He is most perfectly free and hearty in it. . . . If, then, we are so averse to God that we cannot love him; and if our bad disposition is so strong, so settled, so rooted, that we cannot get rid of it; this is so far from being matter of excuse for us, that it renders us so much the more vile, guilty, and hell-deserving. To suppose that our inability in this case extenuates our fault—an inability which increases in proportion to our badness, is to suppose that the worse a sinner grows the less to blame he is."—*Bellamy's True Religion Delineated.*

LETTER IX.

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD.

"Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures."—LUKE xxiv. 45.

"When He the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."—JOHN xvi. 13.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You hear it often said by the holders of the new theology,—"we do not deny the Spirit's work, but we maintain that he works only through the word, nay, that he is *in* the word, so that whenever the word is read or preached, there is the Spirit." Let us examine this statement.

1. If the Spirit is the word, how is it that we are never told so in Scripture? There is not one passage in which this is stated, or even hinted at. The language used throughout the whole Bible is such as continually to impress upon us the idea of his direct, personal, and special agency. It is to Scripture that I appeal; let our opponents produce their proofs from the word of God. Mere human inferences are not enough. It is vain to say, it

must be so. It is worse than vain to rest upon the reasonings of man. In a matter like this, it is to God alone that we can listen. He always speaks of his work in the new creation as being equally direct and special with his work in the old. If there be nothing but indirect agency in the former, then we must maintain that there was the same in the latter, which is precisely the conclusion at which modern infidelity has arrived.

2. If the Spirit is in the word, how is he said to be in the hand of Christ, and at his disposal? If he is in the word, then he is out of the hands of Christ, and it will not be true that he gives eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him; it will not be true that "the Son quickeneth whom he will." The Spirit will then be at our disposal, and wherever *we choose* to send the Bible or the gospel, thither *we* send the Spirit. Christ is not at liberty to "quicken whom he will," for the Spirit is to be dispensed according to our pleasure! If he is so in the word, then wherever the word is, there is the Spirit in all his energy and power. How is this consistent with his being given to Christ, in order that He may pour him out according to his will?

3. If He is in the word, it is unnecessary to

pray that he may be given to us. All that we ought to do is to give thanks to God for having given him: but no man, whether saint or sinner, should pray for the Spirit at all. I should never think of praying to God for a Bible, if I already possessed one: and how can I pray for the Spirit if he be already given me in the word? Nor can I ask God to give his Spirit to any friend, either converted or unconverted, for if he has his Bible, he has all of the Spirit that he ever can have. What good would my praying for him do? And hence some we know are strictly carrying out their principles, and refusing to pray for the conversion of their friends or children. They feel that to pray for their conversion is to ask God to do something directly for their souls, which their theory forbids them to do.

4. If He is in the word, it is needless to pray that He would teach us to understand that word. If God has already put all of the Spirit into the word that he means us to have, it is sinful in us to ask, and foolish to expect more. Yet has not God put into our lips more than a thousand prayers for the understanding of his holy word? When, therefore, we pray to be instructed therein, we ask God to do something for us inwardly, in addition to what

he has already done for us outwardly, to the end that we may learn his truth. We may have read the word times beyond number, but still we know that when God touches the springs of the soul, renewing it and imparting relish for the truth in place of our natural disrelish, every word seems full of new sweetness and beauty. Outwardly it is the same word; but the inward touch of the divine finger upon the soul operates with such wondrous efficacy, that all seems fresh and new. This is utterly inconceivable upon a scheme which admits of nothing but mere outward influence. If the same verse of the Bible appear sweeter at one time than another, the cause of this difference must be a change in the state of the soul. If the soul remains unchanged, the verse will appear the same. But if the soul undergo any alteration, the verse will be felt quite different. And if, in order to relish the things of Christ, which by nature I abhor, my soul must undergo a change, how can this be accomplished but by the Holy Spirit working in me and upon me, "to will and to do, of his good pleasure?" When I sit down in my closet alone, with my Bible in my hand, I lift up my soul to God, and ask him to bless the word I am to read. Of what use is this if there be no *inworking*

Spirit? If he has no access at all to me save through the outward word, then what can he do for me which the word alone cannot do? If he be precluded from direct contact with my soul, then he can afford me no better help than any human friend. Nay, not so much. For the friend can converse with me, reason with me, place the matter before me in different aspects; but the Spirit has no living voice to reach the external ear. What He has written, He has written; and there it remains. He has no means, therefore, of explaining it to me if he has no direct access to my soul. If he were on earth, embodied in a visible form, then he might speak to me, and address me outwardly; then he might explain and interpret according as I needed his aid, though even this operation from without would not change a heart of stone into one of flesh. But seeing he is not so, then how can he reach me? He has given me the Bible; if I can understand it myself, I have no need of him. If I cannot, then how can he make me understand it if he cannot lay his finger directly upon my inner man? If I hate the truth, then how can he change hatred into love? How can he make me cease to hate it, if he can only deal with me through outward means, if he can only ap-

proach me through that very thing which I hate and repel? If my heart be by nature enmity to God, then how foolish to speak of removing that enmity by merely teaching me more regarding that very thing which I hate.*

5. His being in the word, and thus working equally on all that hear the word, is given as the reason why sinners are so responsible for believing, and so guilty in not believing. Our opponents take credit for holding the necessity of the Spirit's work in conversion, but maintain that he works equally in every man, and that were it not for this they could not call on sinners to believe the gospel. Now, is not this an admission that there is in sinners an inability which it requires the power of another to

* It is plain that if these views of the Spirit's work be correct, He does no more for souls than the minister who preaches. And this is in part admitted by some. Dr. Porter of America remarks that a popular preacher in that country made use of the following language. "In renewing men, the Spirit employs means; he does not come and take right hold of the heart and perform an operation upon it; but he presents motives; he persuades by means of truth, and the heart is overcome. . . . to change men's hearts requires only the presentation of truth by the Spirit of God. *His influence differs not at all from that of the preacher, except in degree.*"—*Letters on Revivals*, p. 84. Finney also has the following remark in his twelfth Lecture on Revivals: "In speaking of this change, it is perfectly proper to say that the Spirit turned him, just as you would say *of a man who had persuaded another to change his mind on the subject of politics, that he had converted him* and brought him over."

remove? It does not matter in what way power operates, they are obliged to confess that there is an inability which the sinner cannot remove of himself—an inability which needs the Spirit's power to overcome. But further, it is just saying that man is not responsible *in himself*,—that it is this universal gift of the Spirit, that constitutes his responsibility, and that, but for this, it would be unjust in God to call on him to believe. This of course is just the old Arminian theory of universal grace. In it all obligation and responsibility are founded on this grace which is said to be given to every man. So that if there was no grace, there could be no duty. Thus man's guilt was denied, and thrown over upon God. His accountability was represented not as arising out of the nature which God had originally given him, but out of this universal grace which God had superadded since the fall, without which God could not in common justice call on the sinner either to keep his law or to believe his gospel. Thus, man is not only in himself helpless, which they are thus obliged to admit, but his helplessness is *not sinful!* It is a helplessness which God is either bound to remove by some universal operation of the Spirit, or else to treat as innocent! It is confessed

that his depravity is such as to need the Spirit's power for its removal; but it is maintained that, were that not given, he would not be accountable for it, nor called on to abandon it. It is this universal gift of the Spirit that is the origin, the ground, the measure of man's responsibility!

A favorite and frequent illustration of these views is taken from the eleventh chapter of Matthew, in which they say that the Lord declares that an influence was exerted upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, sufficient to have converted Tyre and Sidon." From this they infer two things:—that God is using with all sinners an influence sufficient to convert them, and that this influence is merely outward, not inward; the words and deeds of Jesus being all the influence made use of.

Now, arguing in their own way, it would appear from this passage, that Jesus says, that an influence was at work, sufficient to have converted Tyre, but not sufficient to have converted Chorazin. How can this prove that God is using with all sinners an influence sufficient to convert them? One would naturally suppose that it proved *precisely the reverse.* The influence, it is said, would have converted Tyre. But Chorazin was far worse than

Tyre, more hardened, more unbelieving. It would require then a much greater influence than that which the Lord was putting forth; for what he was putting forth was only enough to have converted Tyre!

Again, we ask, who made the difference between Tyre and Chorazin? Was it not Jehovah in his sovereignty? Who dispensed to Tyre the lesser blessing and to Chorazin the greater? A sovereign Jehovah. Who withheld from Tyre the influence that would have converted it? Jehovah in his sovereignty. Why did he withhold it? It seemed good in his sight.

We know of no passage which more distinctly and more solemnly declares God's absolute sovereignty. He did far more for Chorazin than for Tyre, yet we are told by some that "he has done the utmost that he can do for every sinner." Had he done for Chorazin what he did for Tyre, repentance would have followed; yet he did not do it. What would have converted Tyre, was withheld from Tyre. What would have converted Sodom was not given to Sodom. What would have converted Chorazin, was not given to Chorazin. Is not all this manifest sovereignty?

These remarks will obviate the difficulty

that has been raised, without imposing on us the necessity of entering at length into the meaning of the passage.

6. If the Spirit work *only* through the word, how can we have access to the souls of infants? They cannot understand the word, yet we know that he works in them, else all who die in infancy *must* be lost. He wrought in the soul of John the Baptist, and as we have reason to believe in many others, from the womb. In such cases it must have been a direct operation of his hand upon the soul before it was possible that the truth could take effect, or be employed by him as an instrument. Here then is a large class of cases in which the Spirit works *directly*, by the immediate touch of his hand upon the soul. And this shows us that he can and does act oftentimes without any outward means.*

Well, but does this prove anything with regard to those of riper years? We think it does. First of all, it shows that the Spirit can operate upon the soul directly, without any outward means at all. And secondly it gives us an insight into the way in which he works

* Perhaps I may be allowed to refer here to two tracts of the Kelso Series upon the Holy Spirit, in which you will find this momentous subject treated more at length than can be done here. Nos. 9 and 13.

through means. Take the case of one of these children in whom he has been working from infancy; trace the progress of his work onwards to maturer years. During the time in which the child could not know the truth, he was working upon the soul; and when the moment came that it did understand the truth, did he stay his hand, did he withdraw his touch, did he cease working in the way in which he had hitherto been doing? Did he not continue his direct working just as before? The only difference was, that now, the mind in which he was operating, began to take on the shape and mould of the truth externally applied to it. Previously he had been working upon the clay alone; but now the clay and the mould are brought into contact, and henceforth all his operations are in connection with both. With the one hand he continues to operate upon the clay, and with the other he applies the mould. These are two distinct processes, one direct, *i. e.*, upon the clay; the other indirect, *i. e.*, upon the mould.

Let us take another instance. The word is likened by our Lord to *seed.* "The good seed of the word," is that which is sown. But this is sown in various soils; and however good the seed may be, if the soil be bad, it will bear no

fruit. Until the soil be made good, the seed will not spring up. The seed may be the very best; it may be sown by the most skilful sower, and in the most skilful way; it may be shone upon by a genial sun; it may be watered with refreshing showers; but all this will not make it grow. Why? Because the soil is bad; it is sown in sand. No skill in the sower, no excellence in the seed, will convert sand into good soil. No showers nor sunshine will make sand fertile. There must be a direct process altering the character of the *soil*, before the seed will spring up. To make the soil fruitful through means of the *seed* is an impossibility. What husbandman would speak in such a way? Would he speak about putting power into the *seed* to fertilize the *soil?* Would he speak of getting at the soil through the seed alone? Would he think of rectifying the soil through means of the seed alone? Would he not at once set about the *direct* process of manuring in order to change the soil and make it fruitful? And what would you think of a man who would say to you, "Oh, I do not deny the necessity of a power being put forth to change the soil; all I say is, that it must be put forth through the *seed* alone; the soil must not be touched directly, that would be an in-

terference with the laws of nature; the power is in the seed; let the seed be well lodged in the ground, and it will soon show its power to change the soil." Would you not say that, whatever his professions might be, he did not really believe in any external or separate power at all, but that the soil and the seed contained all the power that was needed, and that the idea of a power operating independent of both was equally unnatural and absurd? In like manner, when men say, "Oh, we do not deny the Spirit's work and power, we merely say, that his power is in the word," I must say that I find it hard to understand how these men believe in a Holy Spirit at all.

The only way of getting over this difficulty is, by supposing some small remaining goodness about the soil, into which the seed may strike its roots. If this be admitted, then I understand the matter. But if the soil be totally and utterly barren, then nothing can be more unintelligible than to speak of a power in the seed, by which it is able to spring up, without any direct process being applied to the soil.

Or let me take another example. David's prayer was, "open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." These

are plain words. David asks God to open his eyes, in order that, being opened, he may behold these wondrous things. He knew something about the law; he knew that there were wondrous things in it. These he longed to see, but his eyes were closed and dim. What was his remedy? In God alone. In God *directly*, not through the medium of anything else. God's touch alone, *direct and immediate*, could open David's eyes. Had he lived in our day, and complained of dim and closed eyes, he would have been told, "Now you must not pray, you must not go to God to tell him your disease, and say, open mine eyes; you must just set the object before you; there is power in the object to open your eye; but to go to God himself and seek the direct forthputting of his power upon your eye, is nothing but unbelief of his word." But David knew better than these miserable comforters. He knew himself and his disease better than they did; he knew the real seat of the disease, and the real nature of the cure required, better than they; he knew his gracious God, his healer, his enlightener, better than they; and therefore he went directly to him, imploring the *direct* touch of his hand.

He felt exactly as blind Bartimeus felt. He

knew that he was blind, and he wanted to see. Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He was said to be able to open the eyes of the blind by his touch. Accordingly he went and was cured. And how? Did Jesus say,—"Don't come to me and cry for the opening of your eyes, but just look before you at these objects of light; they have power in them to make you see; I only work *through* them; I do not put forth my power *directly* upon the eye; I only put it forth indirectly through these objects, and in no other way?" No, he *touched* his eyes, and said, Receive thy sight. Thus the eye of the body was cured; and thus the eye of the soul is also cured.

But is it not said, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes?" (Ps. xix. 8.) Yes, it is. But what of this? Does this contradict the other? No. In the first place, it is not said here, that the word *opens*, but merely that it *enlightens* the eyes. In the second place, I admit most fully the efficacy of the word: "It is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path." I do not in the very least depreciate the word of the living God. I wish merely to assign to it the place which God does. I see men superseding the Spirit, and setting aside his work, under pretence of hon-

oring the word. And it is this that I refuse to do. I admit the blessed efficacy of the word; but *I maintain also the direct agency of the Holy Spirit upon the soul in order to the reception of that word.* The word is our light, but there must be an "opening of the eye" by the Spirit, ere there can be a "beholding of the wondrous things out of the law."*

I confess I do not see of what use the Holy Spirit is in such a system. Man has all the requisite power; he needs no foreign aid; the truth is presented to him, with all suitable motives and persuasives,—what more is needed? In such a case it would be but mocking him to tell him of the Holy Spirit. There is no need of any help in the matter, far less of Divine help. For *omnipotence* to interpose when no strength is needed beyond what the man possesses, is a superfluous expenditure of power, a mere mockery of help. If the new theorists be correct, there is no necessity for the work of the Spirit in any sense. If man can do all, why call in the aid of the Spirit? To say that man needs the Spirit, is just to say that, without that Spirit, he could not perform what

* On this point see Owen on the Spirit, B. III. Chap. v. § 18; also Fuller's works in numerous places; also Edwards on the Affections, Part III. § 4.

he is called on to do. If, however, he be really able to do all himself, it is absurd to speak of any work of the Spirit in him.

We believe that this point is often stated in the following manner—" man is equally and in the same sense able to believe God's truth as the devil's lie." This I think is the strongest as well as the simplest way in which the matter can be put. Well. It will be admitted that, in no sense whatever, is the Spirit's aid needed or given in order to believe the lie; therefore, *in no sense whatever and in no way whatever*, either in the word or with the word, is the Spirit needed or given to enable man to believe the truth. Surely this is the honest and the plain conclusion from a statement which, from the triumphant way in which it is generally put, seems to be reckoned irresistible. To speak of any work of the Spirit whatsoever, either in or out of the word, is to say that man is *not* equally and in the same sense able to believe the truth of God, as he is to believe the lie of the devil. Therefore, we infer that either this noted proverb must be abandoned, or else the Holy Spirit and his work, in every sense and in every way, must be denied. If a man no more needs the Spirit in order to his believing a lie, than in order to

his believing the truth, it is plain that he needs no Holy Spirit at all. Why then is the Spirit and his work not totally denied? Men are not yet prepared for that. The *name* must in the mean time be retained. In a short time this may be unnecessary.

It has been sometimes said, "Is it not just as easy to believe as not to believe, as easy to turn *to* God as to turn *away from* God?" If this merely meant that the same faculties are required for both, there would be no harm in the expression. But if it mean that our souls are so well balanced, so entirely free, so little injured by the fall, that they can move with the same facility towards God as from God, we deny and condemn the statement. On account of our bondage to sin and bias to evil, it is *not* as easy for us to be holy as to be unholy. The corrupt state of our souls has made the difference. But then, "we are not free agents," it will be said. What, is God not free because he "cannot lie?"* Must we not say that the angels are free agents, unless we can say it is as easy for them to blaspheme as to praise, to rebel as to obey? Their perfect

* The actings of Christ's human soul were all *necessarily* holy, yet were they not entirely voluntary and free? See Edwards' remarks on this. Freedom of the Will, Part III. § 2.

holiness has made disobedience as impossible to them as our corruption has made obedience impossible to us. Is it not their highest glory as well as their completest liberty that they cannot disobey? And is it not our deepest shame and guilt and bondage that sin has such dominion over us, that even when to will is present with us, how to perform that which is good, we find not?

And as to this "power in the word," of which so much is spoken, I confess it is a mystery to me. That there is power in the word—that the word of God is a powerful word, I cordially admit. In no other words is there such a power and majesty. There are no words like the words of God for excellency and strength. Words so weighty, so fit, so full, so big with meaning, are nowhere else to be found. Though in themselves they be but the language of the creature, the poor speech of man, yet it is the Almighty voice that speaks through them; it is the *thoughts* of God himself which they contain. If this is all that is meant by power being in the word, then no one will dispute the matter. But this is not all. Nay, this is not the point at all. No one denies that the words are the words of God, and that they contain the thoughts of

God. But the question is, Do these words contain some mysterious power of making these thoughts to be known and felt by the sinner? Do they contain a power, *independent of their meaning*, to make the sinner *feel* these thoughts which they contain? If it is said, "Oh, no, they contain no such power apart from their meaning; but these *thoughts*, conveyed by means of the word, have the power:" then we must say, that this is hardly intelligible, or, at least, does not touch the point. For thoughts, and words, and ideas, are *passive* things; whereas, according to this idea, they are active things, a living agency capable of operating upon the mind by means of a mysterious power with which they are impregnated. But even granting that they did possess some such active power, still the difficulty is not explained. For the state of the sinner's soul is such as to repel and resist that power. And how is this repelling and resisting attitude of the sinner to be removed? Take an illustration. Suppose the window of my house is darkened by a wall which excludes the sun. The sunbeams beat upon the wall, but still it remains, nay, it grows harder and more impenetrable under their influence. Had it been a wall of

ice, it would have melted away, but its nature is such as to harden, not to soften, under these beams. And how then is the evil to be remedied? By putting greater power into the sunbeams? That is an absurdity. Besides, it is the nature of the wall to resist the sunbeam, and to harden under it; and to put additional power into the sunbeam would only be to call forth additional resistance, and produce more induration. The remedy is plainly the removing of the wall by a power fitted for that purpose—a power (if you like) going along with the sunbeams, and operating simultaneously, but still a *direct* power put forth upon the fabric for its overthrow.

I know that this illustration is a very imperfect one. It fails in many points of resemblance. But still it does not make the case of the sinner worse than it really is. Nay, it does not bring out the worst feature of the case. It does not show the *active and positive resistance* to the light which the sinner puts forth, and which is far worse and far harder to be overcome than the resistance of mere inanimate matter. If, then, it be said, that I have misrepresented and misstated the case, all I shall say is, that I have *understated* the case; but I have not *mis-stated* it. The diffi-

culty is far greater than such an illustration can give us the least idea of.

I do hold, then, *a power along with the word, and in connection with the word;* but to say, that that power is *in* the word, is either a mere figure of speech, or it is an absurdity. When God said, "Let there be light," there went out a power *along with* the word, and the light came into being. Who would say that the power was *in* the word? When Jesus stood at the grave of Lazarus, and said, "Lazarus come forth," there went out a power *along with* the word; yet how absurd to say that it was *in* the word.

It is most needful to maintain the instrumentality of the word in conviction, conversion, and sanctification.* The whole process from first to last, which the Spirit accomplishes, is in connection with the word. The reverse of this might be shown to be scripturally untrue, and philosophically absurd. This is the principle on which God is acting in giving us his Bible. It is the principle on which ministers act in proclaiming the gospel. We cannot

* See Greenhill on Ezekiel, p. 73, who, while strongly pressing man's helplessness, and the direct work of the Spirit, does not scruple to speak of the word as the "chariot of the Spirit;" "it is the word that carries the Spirit to men." See also Turrettine de vocatione et fide. Quest. iv.

hold this too strenuously; for the denial of it would land us in darkness and mysticism; nay, it would be grieving the Spirit of truth. But this is totally diverse from saying that the Spirit is the word, or that there is a mystic power in the word apart from its meaning, or that the Spirit only works through the truth. There is no question as to its being truth by which the soul is impressed; the only question, is whether it is possible for a depraved being (the very essence of whose depravity consists in his being "past feeling," or *unimpressible* by the truth) to be impressed by it until a power has been at work making him *impressible*. In his fallen state he utterly repels the truth,—he is not susceptible of its influence, and the question is, how can that, of whose influence he is not susceptible, ever act upon him until he is made susceptible of receiving its influence.

The truth is, that the sinner is most reluctant to admit that he is entirely in the hands and at the disposal of God, in regard to salvation. He wants to have salvation completely at his own disposal. He sees, that if he can succeed in proving that there is no power apart from the word, nothing but what is contained in the word, he becomes the disposer of his

own destiny. But if he admit a power not in the word, a power coming direct from God, then he is at the disposal of God. This is the secret of the modern idea of the Spirit being *in* the word. Man wants to be his own Saviour, and, therefore, he tries to prove that God has made him so by giving him the word, and putting enough of power into it to save him. This shows us clearly man's dislike to the sovereign will of God, and his reluctance to admit that he is entirely at the mercy of God. But it reveals something more. It shows us that, after all, he does not feel himself safe in God's hands, and, therefore, he wishes to take salvation into his own. And what is this but a clear proof that these very men who speak so loudly of a free gospel, and of the love of God, do not believe that gospel, and do not give credit to that love. If they did, they would not be so anxious to take salvation out of God's hands. They would feel far safer in his hands than in their own. And these ideas of theirs, instead of clearing up and enforcing the gospel, plainly prove that the gospel of the grace of God is not understood at all. These men *have yet to learn what the gospel is.* It is from the dark suspicions of their own hearts as to the character of God

that this attempt to wrest salvation out of his hands, and to place it in their own, proceeds.

Let me illustrate the point before us a little farther. I shall state the following case. It is no mere imaginary one. A dull, stupid scholar once sat beside an intelligent teacher, who sought to instruct him in the things of God. The Bible lay upon the knees of both. But it was in vain. The boy could not be got even to understand the truth regarding the way of life. The teacher explained, and simplified, and illustrated, but with no effect. Often did he wish that he had direct access to the boy's soul, that he might touch its secret springs, and rectify his understanding. He felt that nothing save this could be of any avail. But he could only dwell upon the truth, endeavor to open it up more fully, and press it clearly home. Thus, day after day, sat the teacher in his helplessness, and the scholar in his dulness. Meanwhile the former failed not to commend the boy to God, asking Him who had access to its hidden springs to touch them; asking that Spirit, who alone could renew, and enlighten, and enable to comprehend, to do his work upon the soul, that the truth might at length find entrance. Thus he prayed, and the teaching was given

up as hopeless. One day his pupil came eagerly to him, exclaiming, "Now I understand it all." "Who taught you?" "No one." "How did you come to see it?" "Oh! in a moment I saw it; and it is just the very thing you have been telling me so long, but I never saw it till now: God has opened my eyes." And so it was. That Holy Spirit, who alone has access to the soul of man, had put forth his power, and the boy's dulness had given way. But the work had not been through the truth upon his soul; it had been directly upon his soul, in order to his understanding the truth. It had been exactly what David sought for in his own case, "Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments," (Psalm cxix. 73.)*

* It is remarkable how David, throughout this psalm, prays in this strain; and yet, at the same time, he says, "Through thy precepts I get understanding." Both of these things are true. And to deny either of them would contradict the plain word of God. I admit, most readily, the one truth, that through God's precepts we get understanding; and all I ask is, that the other truth be admitted also, that it is the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes, and "makes us to understand." The two things are quite consistent with each other, and we gain nothing by denying either. Each of these agencies operates in its own way, and according to its own nature: the word in one way according to its nature, and the Spirit in another according to his nature. The only question is, which is *first?* Certainly the Spirit. He brings the soul into contact with the word. He softens the heart, that the word may be felt. He opens the

Let me take another instance. There was a poor idiot who could be made to understand nothing. All his life he had been an idiot, and as an idiot, he lay down to die. Beside his bed there stood a man calling himself a minister of Christ, who came to make mirth with the dying idiot. That man had read his Bible, knew well about it, and had often preached from it. Yet his "understanding was darkened." As he stood at the bedside, all of a sudden the idiot broke forth with the following

eyes that the word may be seen. He makes tender the conscience that the word may penetrate. He was first in the old creation. He is first in the new. The following paragraph from Fuller is so appropriate, that I must be allowed to quote it here:—"It is owing to Divine agency, and to that *alone*, that one sinner rather than another believes in Christ. If God does the same for one man as for another, how does he yet *make men to differ?* If God works effectually on some, that is more than any man will pretend he does upon all; and this will perfectly account for a difference between one sinner and another. . . . . God has so constituted the human mind, that words, whether spoken or written, shall have an effect upon it. The Holy Spirit speaks to men in his word. It would be strange if God's word had not some effect upon people's mind. The influence of the word upon the mind, seeing that the word is indited by the Holy Spirit, may be called, in an indirect and figurative sense, the influence of the Holy Spirit. It was by this kind of influence that he strove with the antediluvians, (Gen. vi. 3.) This influence *ought* to suffice to bring us to repent of sin, and believe in Christ, and were it not for the resistance that is made to it, *would* have such an effect. But through the perverseness of the human heart, it *never has*. From the depravity or perverseness of the human heart arises the necessity of a special and effectual influence of the Holy Spirit.

"confession of his faith" before the astounded hearers:—

> "Three in one, and one in three,
> And the middle's the one that has saved me."

Then he died. No one had heard the like from him before. It was strange and new. Who taught him? God. Who opened his understanding? God. Who put these words into his tongue? God. Who made the poor idiot, who could not read a Bible, to differ from the scoffing minister that had read it a thousand times? God. And was it through *the truth*, that he gave understanding to him who had none? No one in his right mind would speak thus. No. In this case it was the direct touch of the Spirit's hand upon the soul that did the work. It was from within, and not from without, that the renewing power came. He who made the soul, put forth his power and made it new. It seemed like a broken harp. The mere frame-work was there; but everything else had been torn away. Not one note could be struck. But God needed that harp to swell the new song in heaven. And ere it was "vilely cast away," he took it into his own Almighty hand, re-placed the strings, re-tuned them all, and then, ere he removed it from earth, struck one dying note of thrilling power and beauty,

to let men know what a goodly instrument he could make out of that broken harp, from which no music had ever come before.

Let me take another case. Look at the prophets in the Old, and the apostles in the New Testament! Who taught them to speak and write? It is said, "Holy men of God spake as they were *moved by the Holy Ghost*." In teaching them, then, he must have had access *directly* to their souls. He entered at once into their understandings, and taught them. In their case, certainly, there must have been a direct operation upon the soul. Now I know that there is no such kind of inspiration now. This miraculous utterance of new truth has ceased. But I cite this example, in order to disprove the assertion of those who maintain that the Spirit has no direct access to the soul, no way of instructing us, save through the truth. And I also adduce it, because I believe that the method which God took to show the prophets truths absolutely new and unheard of, bears a strong resemblance to the way in which he still shows the sinner truth which is *new to him*—truth of which he understood as little as did the prophets before God had spoken. And I specially adduce it to prove, that even when the

Holy Spirit is thus moving and actuating the whole soul by an internal energy, man is still a free agent and a responsible being—responsible for receiving or resisting the Spirit. The prophets were not mere machines, through which God wrote and spoke, while they themselves felt nothing, having no real sympathy with what they uttered, but merely uttering it because compelled. On the contrary, we see in their case a soul acted on in strict accordance with all the natural laws of its being—nay, each soul acted on in accordance with its own peculiar temperament and gifts of mind. The Spirit of God *fills* him, but does not force him: He pours himself into all his faculties, feelings, sympathies, &c., as into so many human vessels which he wishes to employ in conveying his thoughts to man; but he does violence to none of these. When, for instance, he speaks through Jeremiah, he casts himself entirely into the tender mould of that prophet's mournful spirit, using his gentle voice, weeping with his eyes, sighing in his complaint, giving *divine* expression and utterance to every feeling, nay, to every shade of feeling working in that human heart. Was Jeremiah less *free*, less *himself*, in such a case? Nay, he never was so free before.

He never was so much *himself* before, as when he who made his spirit took it into his hands, and drew out of it depths of feeling, richness of melody, beauty of perception, gentleness of sympathy, utterance of infinite thought, which showed of what that soul was capable, when made entirely *free* by the indwelling Spirit, and touched by the master hand of the "chief musician," who alone knew, and who only could call forth its secrets of full melody,—the whole *diapason* of the harp which he himself had made and strung.

In confirmation of the preceding remarks let me proceed to quote and examine a few passages of Scripture.

I. Luke xi. 12, "*When they bring you unto the synagogues and unto magistrates and powers, take no thought how or what things ye shall answer, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.*" Here, then, we have the direct and immediate operation of the Spirit upon the soul, suggesting suitable truth for the occasion. And any one reading the chapter will see that this promise is to *all* believers, not to the apostles alone. It refers not to what we would call miraculous inspiration, but to the ordinary operation of the Spirit.

Oh, it will be said, but he does this by means of the truth. Now what does this mean, but that he suggests truth through the truth; that is, I suppose, he suggests one truth by means of another; in other words, one truth suggests another without his interference at all. But even granting that he suggests one truth by means of another, granting that this is all that is meant by the Spirit's teaching, the question naturally occurs, who or what suggested the *first* of the series? If I stand upon the margin of some lake, and find all of a sudden ripple after ripple beating upon the grass that skirts it, I look round to see the cause of this, —what began the rippling. How absurd to say, Oh! it is merely one ripple raising another, and forcing it forward to the shore. I am sure it was either the wind that suddenly rose or some stone that had been cast into the waters. Some such cause must have begun the series. And so with *truth*, in the case I have referred to. Even granting that the Spirit did suggest one truth by means of another, how will this account for the suggestion of the *first?* This must have been done in some more direct way, and by some more immediate touch. So that the difficulty still remains; only in the one case it is removed a

little further back, and placed a little more out of sight, as if there was a reluctance to admit the idea of God working directly, as if such an idea were only fitted to alarm and discourage the sinner.

With the daily consciousness of having within me a heart of sin, a hard and ever-rebelling heart, I know not for myself a more blessed, more precious truth, than that I am the clay and God is the potter,—that it is *his* hand that grasps me, compassing me about, and coming into close, direct, warm contact with my naked soul. The thought of nothing but indirect dealing and communication between him and me, is desolate and cold to me beyond conception. And instead of feeling relieved and comforted by being told that the Spirit never works directly upon the soul, but only through the truth, I am cast down indeed, as if bereaved of that which was my chiefest hope, my most precious consolation in the hours of infirmity and conflict, when the flesh within, and principalities and powers without, assail me till I faint upon the field, and all that bears me up is the felt grasp of an infinite hand, the circling pressure of the everlasting arm.

II. Rom. viii. 26, "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what*

we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." This is something very distinct in regard to the working of the Holy Spirit. He *helpeth* our infirmities, or, as it literally implies, he takes hold of our burden, puts his shoulder under it, and sustains the weight so as to prevent it crushing us. How he can do all this, simply and only through the truth, it is hard to discover. What words can more strongly express his direct operation upon the soul? If they do not express this, I know not where words can be found to do so. But the case is far stronger when we consider the expression, "groanings that cannot be uttered." How does he awaken those groanings within, which cannot be clothed in words? By suggesting truth to the soul? This is absurd. If the spirit presented truth to the soul, and in that way created these longings, then surely the soul could express these longings. They had been distinctly and definitely presented to him, and surely he could distinctly and definitely speak of them. If this had been said merely of the poor unlettered saints, this objection of mine might not be altogether applicable, for I know that oftentimes they cannot find words where-

by to express their thoughts; but it is of all saints equally that the apostle is speaking. If in answer to all this it is said that we frequently get glimpses of truth, natural truth, which awaken in us longings which we cannot express, I admit that such is the case; but if this be all that is affirmed by the apostle here, there was no necessity for introducing the Spirit at all. His statement in that case is most incorrect, and fitted to mislead; for he speaks of the Spirit actually making intercession for us (or in us) with those groanings that cannot be uttered. He is represented as one who has come into us, and taken up his abode in us, as one who thus carries on a work from within by means of a direct, though hidden agency; as one who is so identified with us, that the apostle speaks of his prayers and ours, his voice and ours, as if they were one. He is represented here as dwelling in us, filling us, using our faculties and organs as instruments for expressing himself, till, as his operations upon the soul become more close and powerful, faculties, words, voice, give way, and nothing comes forth but the unutterable groan. This, surely, is something very *direct*. It conveys most plainly the idea that there is no intervention of anything (be it the truth or

aught else,) between the touch of the Almighty hand and the soul in which he is dwelling. It shows us a workman *within*, carrying on his operations there, quickening, fashioning, moulding all things to his will,—bringing every part of the soul into contact with the truth that is without, by means of the pressure of his own hand from within.*

III. 1 Cor. xii. 3, "*No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*" This expression corresponds to many others in the New Testament, such as these: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," (Matt. xvi. 17;) "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," (2 Cor. iv. 6;) "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me," (Gal. i. 15.) These passages all suggest the same idea,—that it is

* It seems to be maintained that resisting the Spirit signifies only resisting him *as working through means;* as if we did not resist him directly at all. Now, we admit that to resist the means, is in a certain sense to resist the Spirit. But is this all that is meant by resisting, grieving, vexing the Holy Spirit? No. All the expressions used employ something far more direct and personal than this, especially that exhortation—"QUENCH not the Spirit."

directly through the agency of the Spirit that we are enabled to call Jesus Lord, and that but for this agency we should have remained his enemies. I merely, however, take the first of them, (1 Cor. xii. 3,) as being the most suitable to the object I have in view. It occurs in a chapter where the miraculous gifts of the Spirit are discoursed of, and this enables us to fix its meaning with more distinctness. Let me cite a verse or two: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all; to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; *to another faith by the same Spirit;* to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; . . . *all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*" Such is a brief enumeration of the operations of the Spirit. In these, his mode of working is, to a certain extent, plainly enough declared. It is direct and immediate. How otherwise is it possible that he can confer the gifts of tongues, of prophecy, of healing, &c.*

* Each grace or gift here spoken of was an express manifestation of the Spirit, ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ Πνεύματος—something through which the Holy Spirit gave utterance to his own voice, through which he showed forth his own nature.

No one in his right mind would say that these were conferred through the truth. It must have been the direct and immediate touch of his hand upon the soul. Nothing else could have made them prophesy or speak with tongues. Well, it is just in the midst of this statement of his works, or rather as the introduction to them, that it is said, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." And what are we to infer from this, but that he teaches the soul to own Jesus as his Lord, in the same way as he teaches to prophesy. If it is said, but the passage refers to the inspired teaching of the apostles in proclaiming Jesus to others; I answer, that this only confirms my argument, for if the direct agency of the Spirit was needed to enable them to declare what they knew, much more is that same agency needed to show us the things of Christ. Hence the apostle says in another place, "now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might KNOW the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12.

IV. Phil. ii. 13. "*It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" This is one of the plainest statements we could possibly have had. We are told that

it is God who worketh *in* us. It is an inward operation that is spoken of,—an operation which none could perform, but he who has access to the inmost recesses of the soul. But this is not all. We are told more particularly in what way he operates upon us, "both to will and to do." The springs of willing and of doing must both be operated upon. The hand of the physician must be laid upon the diseased organ, else there can be no cure. Hence David prayed, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies," Ps. cxix. 36.

V. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.*" If this does not denote a direct inward operation upon the soul, removing what is old, and imparting what is new, we know not how language can describe it. To twist such expressions, and say that they merely refer to the outward means which God uses, is to do the most reckless violence to Scripture that can be conceived.

VI. Eph. i. 17. "*The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto*

you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in (*or, in order to*) *the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.*" Here the apostle prays that the Holy Spirit may be given to the Ephesians. And he speaks of him as the Spirit that imparts wisdom, the Spirit that reveals truth. This Spirit is given for the purpose "of enlightening the eyes of the understanding." Can anything be more explicit than this? Surely the enlightening the eyes of the understanding must be an *inward* process,—a thing accomplished, not through the truth, but in order to their understanding the truth. The truth could not be known and felt without this inward enlightenening work of the Spirit. I know that in another sense the truth does enlighten. And I would not on any account undervalue the truth. I would rejoice in it as "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." But when I find this kind of enlightenment declared to be *all* that the Spirit does,—when I find his direct work upon the soul denied, then it is time to declare most broadly the whole truth of God. And here I would offer a single remark upon those passages which speak of the Spirit being given "to them that obey him" (Acts v.

32), and of his being "received through faith." In these our opponents triumph.* They need not. I am quite willing to take Scripture plainly and naturally, just as I find it. I admit at once that these passages all refer to those blessings which we receive *after* believing, and *in consequence of it.* I have no doubt about that. It is quite plain that we do receive far more abundantly of the Spirit *after* believing. But this has nothing at all to do with the question. Admitting that we receive the Spirit after believing, does that prove that we do not receive him also *before* believing, and *in order* to believing? The truth is, that there is one class of passages which speak of what God does in us, and for us, *before* believing; and another which speak of what he does in us, and for us, *after* believing. And both of these declarations must be held fast. Our opponents admit the one, but deny the other.

* It is remarkable that the Socinians and Neologians are quite at one with them on this point. Doederlein, in his Institutions of Theology, states at length, and defends the views of the latter party, coinciding entirely with the modern doctrines. The Racovian Catechism shows us what the former (the Socinians) held. In it the question is put—"Do we need an internal gift of the Spirit in order to believing the gospel?" The answer is, "By no means: we read in Scripture that he is only given to those who have believed the Gospel."

VII. Eph. iii. 16. "*Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*" Here is another testimony equally explicit to the inward operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is said to "strengthen;" and he is said to do this in order "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." What meaning has this language, if there be no working of the Spirit, but the outward and the indirect, through the medium of the truth alone? I might refer to other passages in this Epistle—i. 19; iii. 20. In these we read of the "exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power;" and "the power who worketh in us." Surely no simple-minded reader can fail to see in these expressions, the assertion of *a power working in us*, different from that which the word possesses. It is *along with* the word, but it is not *in* the word, but directly in us. In what stronger or more explicit language could this direct power have been stated?

VIII. John xx. 22. "*He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" This is surely a direct communication of the Holy Spirit to the soul. And it shows us the way in which the Lord gives the

Spirit. There was nothing indirect here. It was not through the truth that this was done. It was the direct impartation of the Spirit by Christ himself. Not another word was spoken through which the Spirit might be said to come in. It was just, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and straightway he was imparted.

IX. Rom. xv. 13. "*That ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.*" It is here stated that it is the power of the Holy Ghost that causes us to abound in hope. And does this not refer us to a power distinct from the word, and distinct from any outward influence? Not, indeed, unconnected with the word, for doubtless the "hope" rested on the sure word of promise; but still distinct from it.

X. John xvi. 8. "*When he is come he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*" This conviction of sin can only be effected by working directly upon the sinner's conscience. That conscience is seared; it is in love with sin; and never will it be convinced of sin, never will it hate it, until the Spirit operate upon it to remove its searedness and insensibility, to soften and make it tender. This must be a *direct* work. The natural conscience repels and resists the truth, nay, becomes more hardened under it.

And to say that it is through the application of the truth alone that the conscience is affected, is just to say that it is softened by that which is hardening it.

XI. 1 John ii. 20. "*Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*" This unction or anointing of the Holy Spirit is that by which we are made to know all things. Now an anointing is something which comes directly in contact with us. Just as the anointing came down on the High Priest, so does the Spirit come down on us. Surely this is something direct. How can the Spirit anoint us *through means* of the truth? This is an absurdity. He anoints us in order to our knowing the truth.

XII. 2 Tim. i. 14. "*That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*" It was the Gospel, or the truth of God, that was committed to Timothy; and this he was to keep, and hold fast by means of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. This is manifestly a direct, inward influence,—an influence operating upon the soul, and enabling it to keep hold of the Gospel. What could be more absurd than to suppose that the apostle meant to say, "Hold fast the truth by means of the truth?" Yet this is

all that some in modern times will allow us to say.*

Let these references suffice. I could quote many more equally strong and satisfactory, but there is no need. No simple-minded student of the word of God can read such passages, without being convinced that the Holy Spirit works *by a direct, inward operation upon the soul.*

But, perhaps, some may here object to much of what has been now adduced in favor of the direct inworking of the Spirit, by saying that they do not deny that He works thus in the souls of believers, but that there is no proof that he works thus in the soul of the sinner *before* he believes, and in order to his believing. With regard to this, I submit the following remarks:—

1. It is an objection that can come only

* I would here briefly ask how our opponents believe in anything like Satanic influence? I do not hold that Satan has access to the soul in the same way, and to the same extent, to which the Spirit has. But the following passages show us, that he has more direct access to it, than by merely presenting a lie to us. Luke xxii. 3, "Then entered Satan into Judas." John xiii. 2, "The devil now put into the heart of Judas to betray him." Acts v. 2, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" The demoniacal possessions prove this point. All these must be held, according to the new theory, strange interferences with man's free agency—interferences far more difficult to solve than those of the Holy Spirit.

from a few of the new sect, for most of them maintain that the Spirit never works *directly* in any, but always indirectly, whether upon believer or unbeliever.

2. There is no Scriptural reason for supposing that there is one kind of operation in the believer, and another in the unbeliever,—that in the case of the one it is direct, and in the case of the other, indirect.

3. If the *direct* work of the Spirit be needful to carry on the work, much more to *begin* it. The first step is the most difficult; and if an unbeliever can take that first step without the direct operation of the Spirit, a believer may easily take all the rest. On the other hand, if a believer needs the direct power of the Spirit to carry on the work, much more does the sinner need that power to begin it.

4. There are passages which imply the direct work of the Spirit before believing.

Ezek. xxxvii. 14. "*I will put my Spirit within you, and ye shall live*"—where the living is the effect of God's putting his Spirit within them.

Zech. xii. 10. "*I will pour upon the house of David, &c., and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn*"—where the looking to Christ is the effect of God's

Spirit being poured out, and where the persons spoken of were evidently unconverted, who had never looked before.

John xvi. 8. "*He will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me*"—where it is plain that the Spirit's work must be before and in order to believing, for it is to show men the sin of which they are guilty by remaining in unbelief. That is, he comes up to an unbelieving soul, and shows it its awful guilt, and then convinces it of righteousness, i. e., leads it to Christ the righteous one.

Acts v. 31. "*Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*" Here repentance is said to be the gift of the risen Jesus. It is he who gives repentance; and he gives it just as directly and decidedly as he gives pardon. It will be said, Yes, Christ gives repentance, by sending his messenger to proclaim that truth through which repentance is produced. Now, I have no doubt that he does this; but is this *all* that he does? Is this all that the above passage implies? Surely to give repentance is something very different from merely sending men to proclaim the truth which has the tendency to produce repentance. To give a man an

estate is something very different from sending instructions to a man as to how he may contrive to procure it for himself. To *give* repentance, has reference to something far more efficacious, as well as far more gracious and loving, than merely to preach to men the truth, by which repentance may be wrought in them.

Acts xi. 21. "*The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*" In this statement, it is plainly implied, that it was the hand or power of the Lord that was the cause of the believing of this great number. Had it not been for this, none would have believed or turned. The first act of believing and turning, is thus plainly ascribed to the hand of God,—to that mighty power, which is here said to have accompanied the preaching of the word. It is not said the hand of the Lord was in the word; but "with them," that is, with the disciples, for they were men full of the Holy Ghost. The words of praying men are blessed for the conversion of sinners. Why? Because their prayers and faith draw down a peculiar blessing which might not otherwise have accompanied the gospel. This could not be the case if the power were in the word alone.

Acts xvi. 14. "*Whose heart the Lord*

opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." This is very clear. Lydia's heart was shut before, but the Lord opened it. It was so shut that she did not even *attend* to what was spoken, far less believe them. God opened her closed heart. Then she began to *attend* to the truth; and after having attended to it, she believed it.

In one of a series of Lectures upon the leading tenets of the new sect, we have the following comment upon this passage :—" He was speaking heart-searching and heart-opening truth; and by this truth which she heard He opened her mind so to attend to what was spoken as to believe it. . . . This gives us no idea of any other opening of the heart than that which takes place by means of the inspired testimony of the apostles."* Where were the faculties of the lecturer wandering to when he penned the above statement? It is singularly absurd and contradictory. Lydia's heart is closed against the truth; and how is this removed? By letting in the truth, says the lecturer! Lydia does not even attend to the truth. How is this to be overcome? By the truth moving her attention to itself! But how can the truth make her attentive, if she

* Lecture ii. p. 15.

will not attend to it? Suppose I wish to enter a house which has been shut against me, and secured by two gates, an outer and an inner. I come up to the outer gate, for it is only through it that I can pass to the inner. I knock, but no attention is given to my summons; the dweller is within, but he declines to admit me even to a conversation at the door. I ask a friend who is nigh what I can do. He very simply tells me that I must go into the house and converse with the inmate, and persuade him to open the door to me! In vain I tell him that the doors are closed, and that I cannot get in even at the outer. He just repeats his advice, that in order to get them opened, I must go in and persuade the owner to unbar them; adding, perhaps, the remark, that any other way than this would be an encroachment upon human responsibility. Is it not clear, then, that God's opening of Lydia's heart was in order that she might attend to and receive that truth which otherwise she never would have allowed to enter? Paul preached the same "heart-searching and heart-opening truth" to many others in the same place; and how, let me ask, is it said of Lydia *alone* that the Lord opened *her* heart? Surely he did something for her which he did not do

for the others, and yet we are told by some that he works equally in all! Why then is it not said he opened the hearts of all, if he had done the same in regard to all? We are told that he did no more for Lydia than for any other! Yet the passage says he opened *her* heart, and does not say that he opened the hearts of others. Oh! but it will be said, Lydia yielded, while the rest persisted in unbelief. And what does this amount to but just this, that the expression "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia," means that Lydia opened her own heart, and attended and believed!

1 John v. 20. "*We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true.*" Here the word translated "understanding" is very explicit. It does not mean knowledge, but the power by which we receive knowledge, the *understanding*. It is the same word in the original as in Matt. xxii. 37, "with all thy soul, and with all thy *mind*:" Eph. i. 18, "The eyes of your *understanding* being enlightened:" iv. 18, "Having the *understanding* darkened:" Heb. viii. 10, "I will put my laws into their *mind*." These passages show us the true sense of the term. And taking all these together, how very strong and decided is

the apostle's statement, "He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true."

At the same time, while I maintain all this, I am quite aware of the many passages in which the truth is spoken of as the instrument or channel through which the Spirit works. I am far from wishing to deny this, or to depreciate the value of the word. All I wish is, to preserve you from running into the most fatal error of the present day, that the Spirit is "in the word," and that he only operates through the word, and *in no other way.* This I consider to be not only unscriptural, but thoroughly poisonous to the soul. It is one of Satan's devices in these last days, for producing a religion so like the real shape and form of godliness, that multitudes will be deceived by it; cheating themselves into the belief that they are sure of heaven, when they have never been born again. Such a religion has no *depth.* It is meagre, lean, and shallow. It is self-taught, self-produced religion. For where is the indwelling, inworking Spirit in all this? Where is the living Saviour himself? Ah! he has been superseded by an abstract something that men call truth; and as Israel made their God-given law a substitute for the living

Father, so men are now making the Christ-given Gospel a substitute for the living Son!

I shall conclude this long letter with one observation, on which I should gladly have dwelt, had there been space. It is this. The expression, "*influences* of the Spirit," is not a Scriptural one, and ought to be avoided. The Bible always speaks of the working of the Spirit, or the indwelling of the Spirit,—not of his mere influences.* And there is a most important difference between these two things. In the former case, everything connected with the Spirit's operations would be direct and personal; in the latter, there is nothing but a certain vagueness which may mean anything, or nothing at all. The *influence* of a person is a very different thing from his personal presence and operation. And we ought to be upon our guard against this form of expression, which I am sorry to think extends far beyond the holders of the new theology. It is of an indwelling Spirit that the Bible speaks. It is an indwelling Spirit that Christ promises. "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John xiv. 17. We are not certain objects acted upon by some distant influence, as the sea is by the moon; we are vessels which the

* See Greenhill on Ezekiel, pp. 71 and 724.

Spirit fills; we are temples in which the Spirit dwells. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. iii. 16.—I am yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"The hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment."—2 Chron. xxx. 12.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."—Psalm li. 10.

"Quicken us, and we will call on thy name."—Psalm lxxx. 18.

"Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created."—Psalm civ. 30.

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—Psalm cxix. 18.

"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies."—Ps. cxix. 36.

"Give me understanding, THAT I MAY LEARN THY COMMANDMENTS."—Psalm cxix. 73.

"Quicken me after thy loving-kindness, so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth."—Psalm cxix. 88.

"Give me understanding, THAT I MAY KNOW THY TESTIMONIES."—Psalm cxix. 125.

"Incline not mine heart to any evil thing."—Ps. cxli. 4.

"Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?"—Isaiah lxiii. 11.

"I will put a new Spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh."—Ezek. xi. 19.

"I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live."—Ezek. xxxvii. 14.

"He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—John xiv. 17.

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me."—John xv. 4.

"Without me ye can do nothing."—John xv. 5.

"When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."—John xvi. 8.

"When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."—John xvi. 13.

"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."—Rom. v. 5.

"Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost."—Acts vi. 5.

"Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul."—Acts xvi. 14.

"Be filled with the Spirit."—Eph. v. 18.

"The Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us."—2 Tim. i. 24.

NOTE.

I subjoin a paragraph from one of the letters in "the Correspondence of the Congregational Churches." It contains a statement of the error, and a refutation of it.

"You distinguish the influence of the Spirit for which *you* plead as an influence BY means, and that for which *we* plead as an influence ACCOMPANYING means. The latter you disown. Now, we have simply to ask you, it there be no influence *accompanying* the means, what else is there but the means? —The engineer may 'turn on' the steam; but it is not the engineer, it is the steam, and the steam alone, that propels the vessel. Suppose you were to say, that the engineer '*works by' the steam*, would you add anything to the idea? We think not. The steam is still the only power. And who would speak of the *wind* or the *tide resisting* the *engineer* working *by the steam?* The resistance is to the one power—that of the steam alone. If there be no converting influence *accompanying* the word, what is there besides the word to produce the conversion? If there be no convincing and saving influence *accompanying* the miracles, what is there besides the miracles to effect the conviction and the salvation? We confess ourselves, therefore, still unable to discern the difference between resisting *the Spirit working by means*, in your sense of the phrase, and resisting *the means themselves:* your denial of any *accompanying* influence of the Spirit, evidently amounting to a denial of any influence of the Spirit at all; there being no other conceivable or possible.

"That, of the *external* influence, considered by you as the

influence of the Spirit, more is used with some than with others,—and more even with some that are lost than with others that are saved, will be found, when analyzed, to amount to no more than this—that *men are placed by Providence in different circumstances, and enjoy various kinds and degrees of privilege.* Some have better opportunities than others of observing the works of nature; some of reading and hearing the inspired word; and some of receiving impressions from Divine dispensations. What is there more? you deny all *inward* operation of the Spirit *accompanying* such means of information, impression, and conviction. In denying this, you clearly ascribe the efficiency to *the means themselves.* And it is in this that we are constrained to regard you as denying the reality of the Holy Spirit's converting agency altogether. If the influence of the Spirit is merely the influence of the word, of evidence, and of circumstances, operating on the human mind independently of any *efficacious, inward, illuminating, spiritualizing energy*, then is there nothing supernatural in the case,—nothing beyond, or different from, the ordinary phenomena of the mind, as affected by information with its attendant proofs, or whatever else may contribute to excite attention and command assent. When you speak of the Spirit as *bringing the means to bear upon the mind, and working by them*, you do no more than put the *Spirit* in the place of *Providence*, or of the human agent through whose instrumentality Providence acts; the means are left to their own natural operation, there being no *other* influence *accompanying* or *superadded*."—Pp. 59, 60.

I may also add a very clear statement upon the point from Pearson on the Creed. "The same Spirit which revealeth the object of faith generally to the universal church of God, which object is propounded externally by the church to every particular believer, doth also illuminate the understanding of such as believe, that they may receive the truth; for faith is the gift of God, not only in the object but in the act. Christ is not only given unto us, in whom we believe, but it is also "given *us*, in the behalf of Christ to believe on Him:" and this gift is a gift of the Holy Ghost, working within us an assent unto that which by the word is propounded to us. By this the Lord opened the heart of Lydia; by this the word preached profiteth. As the increase and perfection, so the original or initiation of faith is from the Spirit of God, not only by an external proposal in the word, but by an internal illumination in the soul; by which we are inclined to the

obedience of faith, in assenting to these truths, which unto a natural and carnal man are foolishness. And thus we affirm not only the revelation of the will of God, but also the illumination of the soul of man to be part of the office of the Spirit of God, against the old and new Pelagians."—Art. viii.

LETTER X.

PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION.

"Clouds without water, carried about of winds"—JUDE 12.

"Alas! we are a company of worn-out Christians; our moon is on the wane: we are much more black than white; more dark than light; we shine but little; grace, in the most of us, is sore decayed."—BUNYAN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You ask me what I think of the religion of the present day—its character as well as its progress. I answer, I can hardly tell. Nor am I willing to enter upon a very full or explicit answer to such a question. I am not qualified to judge. Instead, therefore, of attempting any lengthened answer to such a question, I would merely point out a few things which lie upon the surface, which may help your own judgment upon this point, and may tend to establish you in the midst of so much instability and conflict.

As to the religion of our day, it has a very mixed sort of complexion. Its nature is rather of an indefinite kind, and its progress is not easily ascertained. Our present state is not a healthy or a natural one. It is doubtful and

unsatisfactory. There is much to rejoice in, but much to grieve over. There is bustle, activity, zeal, and liberality; yet all these may exist, and still spiritual life may be low. There may be much blossom and little fruit; and even that little not of the rich, mellow kind that, in other days, drew our Beloved into his garden "to eat his pleasant fruits."

Religion among us lacks the intense *vitality* of other days. It intermits, fluctuates, and then, not seldom, evaporates. It lacks depth and strength. It lacks natural warmth, and too often seems to make up for the want of it by friction and excitement. Hence it is often wan and pale, relieved by hectic glows which soon depart. It has not the healthy complexion of more primitive times. And in evidence of this, we find it continually turning in upon itself, feeling its own pulse, watching its various symptoms, a sure sign of disease, for health is unconscious of itself.*

* One of the great literary journals of our day thus speaks:—"The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick. In the body, the first condition of complete health is, that each organ perform its function unconsciously, unheeded. Let but any organ announce its separate existence, then already has one of these unfortunate false centres of sensibility established itself; already is derangement there. The perfection of bodily well-being is, that the collective bodily activities seem one; and be manifested, not in themselves, but in the action they accomplish."

It bears about it many marks of man's handiwork. The finger of Jehovah is not visibly impressed upon it, so that one looking at it would be constrained to say, This is the doing of the Lord. There is much that is hollow and superficial. It is too hasty, too easy, too light and frivolous. It is wanting in the freshness, the calmness, the simplicity of primitive times. We desire something more solid and more solemn; peaceful but not stagnant; earnest but not feverish; energetic but not unstable.

On the one hand, we have some zealous for orthodoxy—tenacious of old forms and phrases, and making an idol of their ancestral creed. On the other, we have men reckless and headstrong in their innovations; rushing from doctrine to doctrine, in the feverish love of change;* rash in judgment, and shallow in intellect, despising creeds, confessions, catechisms, and old divinity of every kind; setting themselves up as those who alone preach or know the gospel, —the people with whom alone wisdom can be

* The great vice of the present day is presumptuous precipitancy of judgment; and there is nothing from which the cause of Christianity has suffered more than from the impatience of investigation, and that confidence of decision upon hasty and partial views which mark the literary character of an age unreservedly extolled for its improvements in reasoning and philosophy."—*Mayce on the Atonement, Prefatory address.*

supposed to exist, and with whom it is almost certain to die.

On the one hand, we have men preaching the gospel, and, at the same time, hedging it about with terms, conditions, restrictions, prerequisites, as if afraid of the very freeness which they preach; telling men to come to Christ, yet enjoining humiliation, sorrow for sin, prayer, &c. as qualifications, without which they cannot be received, as if disliking the idea of our having to deal with Christ absolutely and simply as sinners, and as nothing else.* On the other hand, we have men, in their zeal for a free gospel, reducing it to a mere form of words—a current set of phrases, talking of it with flippancy and irreverence, as if the process of receiving it were a mere mechanical one, like the learning of the alphabet.

On the one hand, there are those who keep the gospel in the background, and dwell continually on conviction of sin, and repentance, and certain preparatory graces, the depth, and amount, and kind of which are pointed out;

* We have seen, for instance, sermons upon the beatitudes in which "meekness," "poverty of spirit," &c. were made qualifications for coming to Christ; so that, unless the sinner can ascertain that he possesses these, he is not warranted to come to Christ! Few errors can be worse or more utterly unscriptural.

as if afraid that men should come to Christ too soon, and have peace. On the other hand, we have men making light of convictions, as if they were but hindrances, disparaging repentance as inconsistent with the peace of the gospel.

On the one hand, we have some dwelling upon evidences, and experiences, and feelings, continually turning the eye backward and inward, in quest of something there to rest upon. On the other, we have men spurning everything of the kind; not merely rejecting them as the ground of peace with God, but utterly contemning them as nothing but self-righteousness and pride.

On the one hand, we have some giving no counsel to an anxious soul, but merely to go on praying and waiting; speaking of "the pool of ordinances," at which they instruct the sinner to wait till the troubling of the water, as if he was doing right in continuing in unbelief, and as if they themselves shrunk from proclaiming the commandment of God, that men should *immediately* believe and turn, and that it is infinite guilt, as well as unutterable peril, to remain one moment longer in unbelief. On the other hand, we have men forbidding such to pray at all, because God has commanded

them to believe, as if prayer were not oftentimes the first utterance and expression of faith.*

On the one hand, we have those who think assurance nothing else than presumption, and the inlet to Antinomian licentiousness; who speak of it only as a thing attainable at the close of a saint's career—as the result of a summing up of evidences; who make doubts a proof of faith, and a mark of humility, and who look suspiciously upon any who are rejoicing in the Lord. On the other, there are men who make a God of their assurance, and a Saviour of their faith, and an idol of their peace; who will hear of no struggle with an evil heart of unbelief; no warfare between the flesh and spirit; no deep self-loathing and mourning over indwelling corruption, as if all these were but the symptoms of the weakness or the non-existence of faith, instead of their being certain indications of its presence and power. For it is where faith is in its strength, that the conflict is often most desperate.

On the one hand, there are those who make

* "It is the duty of ministers not only to exhort their carnal auditors to believe in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls; but it is at our peril to exhort them to anything short of it, or *which does not involve or imply it.*"—*Fuller's "Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation."*

the work of the Spirit *in them* a resting-place for their soul, and the ground of peace between them and God, instead of singly and steadfastly looking to Christ and his work *for them*, as the one resting-place, the foundation of peace and joy. On the other, we see men ridding themselves of the Spirit's work almost entirely, and in professing to make the gospel simple and faith easy, explaining away the office and operation of that very Spirit, without whom, "gospel" and "faith" are, to the sinner, but empty and unmeaning names.

Thus far I have stated the two opposite extremes. But it is only with one of these that I have at present to do. And it is only of the latter that I would speak in the remainder of this letter.

The individuals referred to are certainly very zealous for the propagation of their opinions, and spare no pains in persuading others to join them. "They compass sea and land to make one proselyte." Wherever an inquiring sinner is heard of, he is immediately searched out, and drawn along with them to attend their meetings and to hear their minister. Books and tracts are thrust upon him; all manner of attention is shown him, and visits paid to him; and the means are plied so

perseveringly, that he finds it not very easy to shake himself free. They think it very uncharitable in him to refuse to attend their place of worship, but they do not at all deem it so never to enter his. They seem to think that every denomination should join them, while they themselves are to stand aloof from all.

They are very censorious. A great part of their religion appears to consist in judging others, and pretending to determine their spiritual state.* They talk flippantly about conversion, and seem to have no difficulty in settling who are converted and who are not, by some peculiar tests of their own. Those who have a single doubt, or who shrink from their language of assurance, are pronounced to be upon the way to hell. They will have it, that nobody preaches a free gospel but themselves, and that it is scarcely possible to hear the gospel out of their meeting-place, or beyond their sect. Their self-confidence is amazing. They boast much of the progress of their sect,

* President Edwards, in his well-known account of the revival at Northampton, under his ministry, mentions as a remarkable feature of some of the converts,—"a peculiar aversion to judge other professing Christians of good standing in the church, with respect to their conversion or degrees of grace."—*Thoughts on the Present Revival, &c.*, sect. v., *Works*, vol. i. p. 337.

and of all their doings in advancing their cause. If they have contrived to raise a little excitement in a place, immediately they announce a revival of religion, number up their converts, and proclaim abroad their success.

They are harpers upon one string—what *they* call the gospel. One would suppose that there was nothing else in the Bible but this. They never seem to get farther than the first principles of the oracles of God. Those passages or chapters out of which they cannot extract this gospel are passed over. Many portions of Scripture are left unread. We have heard of such profane contempt for the word as omitting in family reading such chapters as the ninth of the Romans, or the first of the Ephesians.* As for the "sure word of prophecy," they turn away from it. None of them seem to know aught about it. The second coming of the Lord is little thought of, little preached upon, as the church's BLESSED HOPE. To the millennarian views they have

* Dr. Porter of America, in his work upon Revivals, mentions, that having once preached on election, a man came to him to express his dissatisfaction. "So," said I, "you were not pleased with the doctrine of election?" "No, certainly I am not"—"And what do you think of my text and the chapter (ninth of Romans) out of which it was taken?" "Indeed, sir, to be honest, I have always thought that the Bible would have been quite as good a book without that chapter."

a very strong hostility; for their idea is, that they will ere long be able to convert the world, and thus the thought of Christ's speedy coming, and of the world's waxing worse and worse until he comes, are sad interruptions to their magnificent plans. Hence their antipathy to the subject.

They sit in judgment upon what they hear, not so much caring to be fed, as to criticize and discuss the subject afterwards—to be able to say whether the minister knows the gospel or not—whether he be a converted man or not. They would not scruple to rise and leave the church, if any part of the discourse was not exactly to their taste. "They will not endure sound doctrine: but, after their own lusts, they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."

With these things before me, may I not be permitted to question the reality and solidity of much that is called religion in the present day?

I see careless men taking an easy way of getting to heaven by saying that they believe; and making their own confidence their Saviour. No wrestling with flesh and blood, or with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual

wickedness in high places!* I see troubled souls saying peace to themselves when there is no peace, by resolving to be quite sure that all is well with them, though their hurt be not healed, but only skinned over, and their conscience remains unpurged by the blood of sprinkling. I see men intent upon widening the strait gate and the narrow way, making what they call faith a substitute for everything, superseding conviction, repentance, self-abasement, by their own act of faith. I see men, instead of trembling at the word, taking it into their lips as they would do a song or a proverb, with all the easy flippancy of men who were above being solemnized and overawed with the majesty of the voice of Jehovah. I see men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, boastful of their conversion, forward to speak of it, yet living much as others live, and holding it bondage or legality to be strict in Sabbath-observance, or days of fasting, or similar forms and duties;—nay, some are already denying the authority of the Sabbath. I find men holding the doctrine of "perfection," (some having attained it, and

* "Every man," says Rutherford, in solemn irony, "hath conversion and new birth; but it is not leal come; they had never a sick night for sin; conversion came to them in a night dream."—*Letters*, vol. ii. p. 33.

some not,) yet still censorious, proud, uncharitable, sectarian. I see men mistaking indifference to sin and ignorance of their own deceitful hearts for holiness,—making a merit of not mourning for sin, as if that were unsuitable to one who is forgiven,—not seeking for pardon, nor confessing sin in their prayers, —thus combining the vileness of Antinomianism with the mock-sanctity of perfectionism.* I see some, even, whom I believe to be at heart Christians, running from doctrine to doctrine, from book to book, from church to church, attracted by every novelty in the man or the message. Having lost the glow of their first love, they are seeking it in change and excitement, or the bold asseveration of their assu-

* "The vain, foolish, and ignorant disputes of men about perfect keeping of the commands of God, of perfection in this life, of being wholly and perfectly dead to sin, I meddle not now with. It is more than probable that the men of those abominations never knew what belonged to the keeping of any one of God's commands; and are so much below perfection of degrees, that they never attained to a perfection of parts in obedience, or universal obedience in sincerity. And therefore many in our days who have talked of perfection have been wiser, and have affirmed it to consist of knowing no difference between good and evil. . . . Others, who have found out a new way to it by denying original indwelling sin, and attempering the spirituality of the law of God unto men's carnal hearts, as they have sufficiently discovered themselves to be ignorant of the life of Christ, and the power of it in believers, so they have invented a new righteousness that the gospel knows not of, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds."—*Owen on the Mortification of Sin.*

rance. Miserable exchange, indeed, for the loss of their first love! Vain device to recover the fresh life and glow of other days by having recourse to something else than the living Christ himself! Sad delusion of the false spirit, to which some seem to be given over, in righteous recompense for having rejected the unction of the Holy One!

But I shall not prolong the description. I have already said enough to give you some idea of the state of religion among many in our day. I do not say that this description applies to all the holders of the new theology. No; I believe there are some to whom it does not. They are holy, and living men, in spite of their system, and in opposition to their own theology.

Those to whom it may apply may take offence at what I have written. They may deem me uncharitable and harsh. But I have written strongly because I felt that the evil was great, and that smooth words would have but concealed its magnitude. The words may seem sharp and severe, but no hostile feelings towards any individuals whatever mingle with my exposition of their doctrines.

Having myself written much in defence of a free gospel, I felt the more called upon now

to write what I have written here, and to write it in the way that I have done. I hold and preach as free a gospel as ever I did, nor shall I be driven from it by the extremes into which some have gone. They have brought reproach upon the freeness of the gospel by the false doctrine with which they encircle it. They have made many suspicious even of the very name of the gospel. But this is only Satan's old device. He wants to make the gospel odious; and he has, to no small extent, succeeded. But shall this hinder us from proclaiming it as before? Shall this lead us to hedge it about and guard it, and affix conditions to it, because of such abuses? No; let us grasp it entire. Let us lift up our voices as loudly as ever,—"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

Let us not limit the gospel, nor abate aught of its absolute and unconditional freeness. Let us not cast any stumbling-block in the sinner's way, nor tell him that he is not at liberty to come and be forgiven, just as he stands this very instant. Let us not tell him that he must get quit of his sins, and repent and pray, and wait, and do his best, in order that after all this he may be qualified for coming to the Saviour. Let us not allow him to suppose

that there is any one thing required of him before coming, or that he is not welcome to his Father's house and his Father's arms, even now, poor prodigal as he is.

We may be accused of inconsistency and self-contradiction,—one sermon may be contrasted with another,—one statement may be held up as the antagonist of the other. But still let us not be moved away, either from the the gospel or its hope. We believe in a gospel free to ALL, and we preach it as such,—going up to every man with the message of peace on our lips, and the blessings of salvation in our hands, saying, "Be thou reconciled to God."

Or, perhaps we may be accused of an ignorant attachment to antiquated creeds, and of blind veneration for the straitened theology of other days. Now, though wishing to draw direct from the fountain-head, and to call no man master, yet we do confess a liking to those doctrines which, in life and in death, were grasped so strongly by our fathers,—those much-praying, much-believing, deep-thinking, hard-toiling, sore-suffering men, whose eyes grew early dim, and whose hair grew early gray. We are not ashamed to confess a satisfaction in sitting at the feet of such men, and listening to their solemn teaching, in preference

to seeking instruction from men whose shallowness and self-confidence make us feel, that instead of teaching others, they have need that one teach them again what be the first principles of the oracles of God.

Yours, &c.

THUS SAITH THE LORD:

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, where there is no peace."—Jer. vi. 14.

"They are prophets of the deceit of their own hearts."—Jer. xxiii. 26.

"I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words, every man from his neighbor."—Jer. xxiii. 30.

"A voice of a multitude being at ease was with her."—Ezek. xxiii. 42.

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."—2 Tim. iii. 7.

"Beguiling unstable souls."—2 Pet. ii. 14.

NOTES.

Towards the close of the 16th century, lax views regarding the work of the Spirit seem to have been introduced into Holland in connection with or at least in the train of Socinianism. In the beginning of the following century, these opinions spread, and a controversy arose which led to the assembling of the Synod of Dort in 1618, at which Synod these were strongly condemned. The statement of the Synod is as follows:—"Which regeneration, or second creation, is not brought to pass by bare instruction sounding to the outward ear, nor by moral inducements; no, nor by any kind of operation so carried on, that when God had done his part, it should remain in man's choice to be or not to be regenerate, to be or not to be converted; but is a supernatural, a most powerful, and withal, most sweet, wonderful, hidden,

and unspeakable working, being for the mightiness thereof not inferior to the creation of the world, or the raising of the dead."

But the decree of the Synod did not arrest the controversy; it rather called it forth in a new shape. The *old* Arminians were silenced, but not convinced; while in their place there arose a class professing to agree cordially with the synodical articles, yet putting a construction of their own upon them. Among the first of these was John Camero or Cameron, originally a Scotsman, but who had spent many years abroad. He was attacked on right and left. The orthodox maintained that he was departing from the Synod's Articles. Some of the thorough-going Arminians assailed him as dishonest, and one of them anonymously, under the name of "Vir Doctus," published a letter against him, of very considerable length, expressing his surprise that Camero should profess to agree with the Synod. Camero wrote a long and somewhat sharp but elaborate reply, occupying nearly 80 folio pages of his works, in which he maintains his orthodoxy most strenuously. He is perhaps not so explicit as he might have been; at the same time, he is very far from countenancing the modern notions. His disciples, Amyrald and Testard, continued to maintain the same ground. They were vigorously and learnedly opposed by Rivet.

The controversy went on, and was taken up in France by Pajon, Protestant minister at Orleans, a man of acute and subtle mind, who had distinguished himself in the Popish controversy. He was born in 1626, and died in 1685. His opinions went under the name of *Pajonism*.* He did not deny the necessity of grace, even preventing grace; nor even the reality of grace working in us all that is good; nor the particularity and efficacy of grace. "He wished only to inquire into the *mode* of the Spirit's operation, and how grace is rendered effectual in us; whether this operation of grace in those that believe, or the elect, is only moral and rational, —that of an *objective* cause, by which the Spirit acts efficaciously, no doubt, upon the mind in illuminating it, upon the heart and will in powerfully turning them, yet still through the *mediate* operation of the word and other external means, such as the power and efficacy of reasons, motives, opportunities, which are *objectively* presented to our mind in the

* "Invisum nomen Pajonismi."—*Spanhemii Elenchus*, p. 285.

Word of God, by the promises, threatenings, &c., and necessarily determine us. And that thus the efficacy and insuperability of grace does not arise from the invincible, immediate, and supernatural operation of the Spirit upon the mind and will of those who are called according to God's purpose, distinct from the external efficacy of the Word, and of the means which are presented to us; but it arises, on the one hand, from an internal disposition of the man, which is very different according to the difference of mind, inclination, corruption; and on the other, from the external presenting of objects, which grace so dispenses to the elect, and with such circumstances, that they cannot fail to affect the minds of those who are rightly disposed, and to win the assent of their wills, and thus produce faith." Such is the account given us of Pajon's opinions by a contemporary. (Frederick Spanheim the younger, in his *Elenchus Controversarium selectiorum*, p. 285.) They are a step in advance of Camero's views, and come nearer the Pelagianism of modern times than almost any heretofore. Mosheim seems to wish to discredit the charges against Pajon as made by his adversaries; but Spanheim, who gives a very calm and particular account of his views, professes to draw his statements from unexceptionable authorities. Both Mosheim and his translator leaned too much to Pajon's views, and hence the desire of both to ward off the accusations. After Pajon's death, his nephew, Papin, carried on the controversy, in which he was opposed by the famous Jurieu of Rotterdam. Papin's opinions were condemned in 1688 by the French Synod, and shortly after he himself joined the Church of Rome.

Somewhat similar opinions, though in measure modified, appeared not only in our own country, but also on the Continent, about the middle or towards the end of the last century. The whole tone of that century was decidedly of an Arminian cast. Pajon's views are substantially the same as those to be found in Doederlein and Knapp in their *Institutes of Theology*, the latter of which has lately been reprinted. The former of these devotes a long section to the illustration and defence of his views upon the work of the Spirit, which correspond very strikingly to the dogmas of our own day. Doederlein, vol. ii. pp. 585–650, *De operationibus gratiae.* Knapp, pp. 396–412. The translator of Knapp, however, gives two very striking passages from Bretschneider and Reinhard, in favor of an *immediate* operation of the Spirit. "That God has power to act inwardly upon the souls of men,

and to awaken ideas in their minds, cannot be denied. As the Creator of their spirit, he knows their nature, and how he can operate upon them, and as Almighty he must be able to produce in his creatures any effect which he desires. The possibility of an inward agency of God upon the world of spirits cannot be denied, although the manner in which this agency is exerted is inscrutable, which indeed is true as to the manner of all Divine operations. With what truth is it supposed that these influences must hamper the free agency of the mind, and reduce the subject of them to a mere machine? Does not the teacher often, in giving instruction to the child, suddenly interrupt the course of his thoughts, and put him on an entirely new train of ideas? But are the laws of mind in the child violated by this interruption? But the teacher, it is said, makes use of words. Cannot God, however, by an *alloquium internum* cause new thoughts in the souls of men? Or are words the only way in which a spirit can impart his light to other spirits?"—*Bretschneider.* "There can be no reason why we, with the Scriptures, should not conceive of an *immediate* influence, since such an influence is far more adapted than one which is *mediate*, to the sphere (the spiritual world) of which we are speaking."—*Reinhard.*

It is worthy of notice that all the Socinians and Neologians abroad, all the High Church divines in England, and *Moderate* divines in Scotland, have denied the doctrine of an immediate operation of the Spirit, while almost all the godly Lutherans and Calvinists abroad, Reformers, Puritans, Nonconformists, Covenanters at home, have maintained it. Whenever there was *death* in the church, then the immediate energy was denied—when there was life then it was admitted, even by such men as Wesley, who contended for an universal atonement. The *Rowites* in our own day never maintained that the Spirit was in the word, or that he wrought equally in all. They held only that Christ had the Spirit given him for all, and that it was out of him that the sinner is to obtain it. See *Campbell's Sermons*, vol. i. pp. 100 and 179, and other places.

I have thrown these few facts together, merely as what have occurred in my own reading, without pretending to give anything like a full or connected view of the matter in question.

In addition to the above hints, the reader may consult Dr. M'Crie's Life of Rivet, in the volume of his Miscellaneous Writings, pp. 124–128. There the following curious remark

occurs,—a remark illustrated by the tactics of some in our day. "Those who have attempted to introduce novel opinions in churches have often defended themselves from the writings of those who were never before suspected of entertaining such sentiments as theirs. . . . It is not difficult to extract from former authors detached sentiments, or incidental and loose expressions, appearing to favor an error which was not then broached, or which they were not guarding against, while they wrote against adversaries of an opposite description." P. 126.

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